



PHD

Once Upon a Consumer

Co-creating Personalised and Unique Retail Experience through Life Story Swapping

Su, Lin

Award date:
2013

Awarding institution:
University of Bath

[Link to publication](#)

Alternative formats

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact:
openaccess@bath.ac.uk

Copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Access is subject to the above licence, if given. If no licence is specified above, original content in this thesis is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) Licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). Any third-party copyright material present remains the property of its respective owner(s) and is licensed under its existing terms.

Take down policy

If you consider content within Bath's Research Portal to be in breach of UK law, please contact: openaccess@bath.ac.uk with the details. Your claim will be investigated and, where appropriate, the item will be removed from public view as soon as possible.

Once Upon a Consumer: Co-creating Personalised and Unique Retail Experience through Life Story Swapping

Lin Su

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

Department of Marketing, School of Management

July 2013

Copyright

Attention is drawn to the fact that copyright of this thesis rests with its author. A copy of this thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with the author and they must not copy it or use material from it except as permitted by law or with the consent of the author.

This thesis may be made available for consultation within the University Library and may be photocopied or lent to other libraries for the purposes of consultation.

Signature:

Date:

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	6
ABSTRACT.....	7
1 CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	8
1.1 Research Aim and Objectives	14
1.2 Research Questions	15
1.3 Contributions	15
1.4 The Structure of the Thesis.....	16
2 CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	18
Introduction.....	18
2.1 Service-Dominant Logic Approach.....	19
2.1.1 Basic Concepts of Service-Dominant Logic	19
2.1.2 Operant Resources and Customers as Performers for Co-creating Values	22
2.1.3 Social and Cultural Aspects of the Consumer's Operant Resources.....	24
2.1.4 The Firm as Value Proposition to Facilitate Interactions	28
2.1.5 Value Co-creation Process is Network-oriented	33
2.2 Past Research on the Construction of the Consumers' Retail Experiences.....	36
2.2.1 The Recognition of Operant Resources, and the Key Roles of the Consumer in Retailing	37
2.2.2 The Recognition of the Sociocultural Aspect of Value and Experience, and the Consumer-to-Employee Interaction in Retailing.....	42
2.2.3 Limitations of Past Research on the Consumer's Retail Experience Construction.....	47
2.3 Current Research on the Co-creation of the Consumers' Retail Experiences, and Research Gaps.....	50
2.3.1 Current Approach: Retailer Provided Spectacular, Entertaining, and Sociocultural Aspects of Resources.....	51
2.3.2 Research Gap: The Details of the Consumer's Stock of Social and Cultural Operant Resources.....	58
2.3.3 Current Approach: The Consumer-to-Physical Retail Atmospheric Interaction	60
2.3.4 Research Gap: The Consumer-to-Employee Interaction, and the Detailed Value-in- Use Process.....	63
2.3.5 Current Approach: The Spectacular Aspect of the Retail Experience, and the Promotion of the Brand	67
2.3.6 Research Gap: The Personalised and Unique Retail Experience, and the Consumer-oriented Outcomes	68
Summary	69
3 CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY.....	72
3.1 Ontological Approach – Constructionist	73
3.2 Epistemological Approach – Interpretivist.....	75
3.3 Methodological Approach – Hermeneutics.....	77
3.4 Research Methods – In-depth Interviews and Participant Observations	79
3.5 Data Collection.....	82
3.5.1 Interview Collection 1 – From the Consumer's Perspective	84
3.5.2 Interview Collection 2 – From the Employee's Perspective	88
3.5.3 Participant Observations.....	93

3.6	Data Analysis	97
3.7	Research Quality	99
4	CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS	101
Findings Part 1: Four Themes of the Life Story and Associated Social and Cultural Resources of the		
	Consumer	102
4.1	Introduction	102
4.2	The Family Story – Family Values and Kinship	103
4.3	The Tragedy Story – Grief, Morality, and Values of Life.....	110
4.4	The Gendered Story – Gender Roles and Gender Stereotypes.....	118
4.4.1	The Femininity Story – Feminine Aspect of the Female Gender Role	119
4.4.2	The Feminist Story – Heroism and Power Perspective of the Female Gender Role	124
4.4.3	The Masculinity Story – Masculinity Aspect of the Male Gender Identity.....	128
4.5	The Community Story – Tribalism and Collectivism Aspect of Values	134
4.6	Summary of Findings Part 1	142
Findings Part 2: Outcomes of the Life Story Swapping Aspect of the Consumer-to-Employee		
	Interaction	145
4.7	Introduction	145
4.8	General Outcomes	146
4.8.1	Customer is the Beneficiary	147
4.8.2	Building and Maintaining a Long-lasting Customer Relationship	158
4.9	Each Type of Life Story has a Distinctive Outcome	174
4.9.1	The Family Story.....	175
4.9.2	The Tragedy Story.....	176
4.9.3	The Gendered Story.....	178
4.9.4	The Community Story	179
4.10	Summary of Findings Part 2.....	181
Findings Part 3: The Storytelling and Swapping Facilitate the Process of Value-in-Use		
4.11	Introduction	183
4.12	Pre-story Phase and Value-in-Exchange	186
4.12.1	Store Atmospherics Bridge Initial Interaction.....	186
4.12.2	The Consumer Checks the Suitability of the Sales Personnel as the Story Swapper and Value Co-creator.....	190
4.13	Storytelling and Swapping Phases and Resource in Integration	196
4.13.1	The Storytelling Phase.....	196
4.13.2	The Role Switching and Story Swapping Phase	205
4.14	Summary of Findings Part 3.....	214
5	CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	217
5.1	Discussion	217
5.1.1	Life Narrative and the Consumer’s Stock of Operant Resources.....	220
5.1.2	The Vocal Interaction, and the Meaning/Identity Co-creating and Problem Solving Process.....	226
5.1.3	The Personalised and Unique Retail Experience of the Consumer, and a Long- lasting Relationship	230
5.2	Contributions	233
5.3	Managerial Implications.....	236
5.4	Limitations.....	241
5.5	Future Research Agenda.....	243
References		246

List of Figures

Figure 1 Foundational Premises of Service-Dominant Logic.....	21
Figure 2 The Customer's Operant and Operand Resources.....	25
Figure 3 The Provider and Customer's Value Creation Spheres	30
Figure 4 Framework for Understanding Environment-User Relationships in Service Organisations	44
Figure 5 Four Types of Retail Themes	56
Figure 6 Four Types of Personal Life Story	103
Figure 7 General Outcomes and Four Types of Distinctive Outcome.....	146
Figure 8 The Consumer's Meaning Co-creating and Problem Solving Process.....	184
Figure 9 The Process of Value-In-Use Through Vocal Interaction.....	185

List of Tables

Table 1 Informant Details – Interview Collection 1	86
Table 2 Informant Details – Interview Collection 2	90
Table 3 Informant Passages of the Family Story	107
Table 4 Informant Passages of the Tragedy Story	114
Table 5 Informant Passages of the Femininity Story	121
Table 6 Informant Passages of the Feminist Story	124
Table 7 Informant Passages of the Masculinity Story	130
Table 8 Informant Passages of the Community Story	137
Table 9 Informant Passages of Creating Individuality	149
Table 10 Informant Passages of Receiving Efficient Help and/or Solution	151
Table 11 Informant Passages of Obtaining Companionship and Employee Intimacy	156
Table 12 Informant Passages of Changing/Keeping the Consumer's Perceptions....	160
Table 13 Informant Passages of Building Trust and Credibility	164
Table 14 Informant Passages of Creating a New Cycle of Story Swapping and the Co- creation Process	168
Table 15 Informant Passages of Service Loyalty	171
Table 16 Informant Passages of Word-of-Mouth	173
Table 17 Informant Passages of the Family Story Associated Distinctive Outcome	175
Table 18 Informant Passages of the Gendered Story Associated Distinctive Outcome	178
Table 19 Informant Passages of the Pre-Story Phase – Store Atmospherics.....	188
Table 20 Informant Passages of the Pre-Story Phase – Characteristics of the Sales Personnel.....	192
Table 21 Informant Passages of the Pre-Story Phase – The Used Language of the Sales Personnel	195
Table 22 Informant Passages of the Storytelling Phase	203
Table 23 Informant Passages of the Story Swapping Phase	211

Appendices

Appendix I Main Questions in the Interviews 1.....	282
Appendix II Main Questions in the Interviews 2.....	283

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completing of this thesis has been one of the most significant academic challenges I have ever had to face. Without the support, patience and guidance of the following people, the completion of this research would not be possible. It is to them that I owe my deepest gratitude.

I would like to thank Professor Michael Beverland, who took me on as my supervisor despite his many other academic and professional commitments. His wisdom, knowledge and commitment to the highest standards inspired and motivated me. I am also deeply grateful to Professor Avi Shankar, for guiding my research for the past several years and helping me to develop my background in sociology.

Special thanks for my beloved parents, and Richard Barks, who have always given unconditional love and support. Without their encouragement, and constantly have faith in me, this research would have not been completed. I would like to thank Amy Yau, who as a good friend was always willing to help and give her best suggestions and moral support. It would have been a lonely journey without her. Many thanks to Elizabeth, Mahsa, Max, my interviewees, and other people who participate in to the co-creation process of this thesis. Without their help, this study would not have materialized.

ABSTRACT

Consumers are identity seekers and makers, and also they are storytellers and help seekers. This research develops a consumer-centric perspective to investigate the vocal performance aspect of the consumers' retail experiences, by focusing on how customers narrate and exchange their life stories with sales people to co-create personalised and unique shopping experiences in retail stores. In-depth interviews and observations were conducted in order to: first, explore in detail consumers' rich stock of sociocultural operant resources that are deployed and collaborated; second, produce a specific process map on how resources are integrated through the consumer-to-sales person interaction; and finally, discover various outcomes that are developed through the story swapping perspective of human interaction.

The findings suggest that, first, the utilisation of life story swapping aspect of vocal performance provides a platform for the consumers to deploy personal resources that are enriched with everyday life and practices. Second, role playing and switching can facilitate the value-in-use process, and thus to convert the consumers' life experiences into meanings, identity, and solutions. Finally, the story swapping associated outcomes provide a consumer-centric point of view in looking into the customer's side of benefits gaining as well as the retailer's side of relationship building and maintaining.

An important contribution of this research is the notion that it extends the Service-Dominant Logic perspective to develop a better understanding of the relationship between the consumer's stock of sociocultural operant resources and the co-creation of experience in the retail environment. In particular, it explores and examines the roles of the consumer-to-sales person interaction in facilitating the value-in-use process.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Service-Dominant Logic provides an evolutionary perspective for re-thinking about the roles of the consumer, interaction, and service offering in the construction of the customer's retail experience. Extant retail literature (e.g. Borghini et al., 2009; Diamond et al., 2009; Hollenbeck et al., 2008; Kozinets et al., 2004; Sherry, 1998) has developed a focus examining the co-created role of the consumers in acting upon on firm-provided physical store theming to co-interpret the cultural meanings, ideologies, and identities from their shopping trips. It can be argued that the current retail approach tends to neglect the following four agendas.

First of all, the existing research focus is on the design scenarios of different types of themed retail environments that are provided by the retailers, including technological, functional, aesthetical elements, and cultural aspects of offerings. However, details of various types of the customers' stock of social and cultural operant resources that individuals actively deploy are unclear.

Second, Service-Dominant Logic highlights that "interaction" is the key to contributing to the value co-creation process (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). The interactive behaviour between the consumers and the physical aspect of store atmospherics is the matter of concern. However, the human perspective of the interaction (i.e., consumer-to-sales person) seems to be underestimated.

Third, Service-Dominant Logic scholars often put emphases on the role of the value-in-use as a process in facilitating the co-creation of value (e.g., Frow and Payne, 2011; Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Gummesson, 1991; Lusch et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2006, 2008). Meanwhile, the existing retail literature tends to address the resource integration nature of the consumer's retail experience co-construction (e.g. Borghini et al., 2009; Diamond et al., 2009; Hollenbeck et al., 2008; Kozinets et al., 2004). However, the detailed process on how resources are deployed, interacted, and integrated between the value co-creators need to be examined.

Finally, scholars and practitioners have mainly been concerned the building of customer experiences in the context of themed retail environments where delivering spectacular aspect of retail experience as well as the promotion of the brand are the primary goals. In contrast, it is essential to develop a consumer-centric point of view in exploring the customer's side of obtain, that is to examine the personalised and unique perspectives of the consumers' retail experiences by prioritising the individuals' operant resources that are constructed through their personal and everyday lives.

Service-Dominant Logic is integrated as the theoretical approach of this thesis, as it emphasises a consumer-centric approach, which implies consumers are shifting from passive value receivers to active value co-creators, who deploy their knowledge, skills and other competencies to interact and collaborate with the retailers, employees, and other resource integrators across networks and thus to co-create value and experience

(Vargo and Lusch, 2008). The foundational premises of Service-Dominant Logic have provided a frame of theoretical references for thinking about a co-creative way regarding the retail revolution, that the customers are operant resources and key performers who co-create values, whilst the firms provide value propositions to facilitate in-store interactions. Moreover, this value co-creation process is network-oriented, whereby brand communities, consumer tribes, and other consumption groups become involved at the same time in co-constructing: values, beliefs, and experiences (Lusch et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). It is believed here that the adoption of Service-Dominant Logic can assist this researcher to analyse more effectively the consumer's side of knowledge and skills that can be brought to the value-in-use process.

It is posited that a review of published retail articles on consumer experience, through the lens of the common key characteristics of the Service-Dominant Logic, will facilitate the identification of the lacunae that are in this literature. That is, during the last 100 years, the marketing paradigm has shifted from a “to market” focus, in which marketing was about changing the ownership and physical locations of goods to a “market to” situation, in which goods were produced to satisfy consumers’ needs, and then to recently a “market with” orientation, whereby operant resources are the key elements of competitive advantage and value is co-created through the collaboration of all the professionals, service providers, and other customers of the whole communities, with consumers being the co-creators of value (Lusch et al., 2007; Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). In parallel with the emerging logic of marketing, retail atmospherics and consumer retail

experiences study is also shifting from a goods-orientation approach to a service-grounded perspective.

During the period from the 1960s to the 1970s, retail environment study was goods-oriented since scholars believed that the function of marketing was to analyse and research customers' needs and wants, and their goods were produced to satisfy their needs and those of the marketplace. Therefore, research of store "atmospherics" was mainly focused on studying the physical arrangements (e.g. shelf space) influencing customers' shopping experience and purchasing behaviours (Cox, 1964, 1970; Smith and Curnow, 1966; Kotzan and Evanson, 1969).

Since the 1980s, retail academics have started to focus on examining the customers' experiential and emotional aspects of their consumption. Regarding this, an environmental psychology approach has been largely used by retailing academics to explore the mediating role of atmospherics-generated emotions and their effects on customers' attitudinal/behavioural responses (Turley and Milliman, 2000). Meanwhile, researchers into servicescapes, an extended theory that has been built based on the environmental psychology approach (Bitner, 1992; Harris and Ezech, 2008), have come to realise the existence of the social, cultural, and meaning dimensions of the consumption experience and interactive behaviours between consumers and employees, especially in service organisations (Arnould et al., 1998; Bitner, 1992).

Current retail literature has extended the servicescapes approach to developing research on evaluating theatre-generated retail environments and scholars have similarly investigated the designing scenarios of different types of themed retail environments (i.e., themed retailing, brandscapes, flagship brand stores, themed entertainment brand stores, themed flagship brand stores, and brand museums). These firm-provided environmental settings have mainly been focused on either physical aspects of design, including technological, functional, economical, and aesthetical factors or cultural dimensions of offerings, such as myths, narratives, and ideology construction (e.g. Borghini et al., 2009; Gottdiener, 1995, 1998; Hollenbeck et al., 2008; Kozinets et al., 2002, 2004; Peñaloza, 1999; Sherry, 1998). As a consequence, these retailer-provided resources assisted companies in achieving two major goals: first, delivering aesthetic and hedonic pleasure to shape spectacular or overwhelming experience for customers (e.g. Kozinets et al., 2004; Verhoef et al., 2009); second, promote the brand, build brand loyalty, create brand images, and deliver brand meanings as well as ideologies to customers (e.g. Arnold et al., 2001; Borghini et al., 2009; Diamond et al., 2009; Hollenbeck et al., 2008).

Even though current retail research has shown a growing interest in exploring the co-creative role of individuals in constructing value and experience, there would appear to be an implicit assumption that the retailers are in the dominant position in value creation as the vast majority of this literature has concentrated on their resource offering in constructing consumers' experience and promoting the brand, as well as their provision of entertainment as the central means of consumption. That is, customers are still studied as passive value receivers who immerse themselves in the

firm-provided store environment, which is used manipulatively to interpret brand meanings, images, and ideologies. Consequently, the detailed information of the consumer's stock of rich competencies he/she can activate and deploy is largely unknown.

In addition, "interaction" plays a crucial role in resource integration and hence simply focusing on consumer-to-physical store surroundings interaction gives a rather one sided account of this process. In particular, one of the servicescapes features is consumer-to-employee interaction (Bitner, 1992), and also service encounter scholars (e.g. Solomon et al., 2010; Surprenant and Solomon, 1987) stress that the sales person is one of the most important in-store factors in contributing to the consumer's retail experience construction.

Furthermore, scholars and retailers have mainly been concerned with the constructing of customers' experiences in the context of themed retail environments and as a consequence, these firm-provided retail settings assist the company in achieving two primary goals: first, shaping pleasant or overwhelmed experience for customers; second, selling brand-related products in the entertaining context, and building brand loyalty, creating brand images, and delivering brand meanings to customers. Hence, it is essential to build a consumer-centric point of view to explore the customer's side of obtaining, that is, to examine the personalised and unique perspectives of the consumer's retail experience by prioritising the individuals' operant resources that are constructed through their personal and everyday lives.

Given the above discussion, it is essential in this research endeavour to build up a consumer-centric perspective by conducting in-depth evaluations that help to interpret the consumers' side of rich resources and to examine how consumer-to-sales person interactions can activate the social and culture enriched personal competencies of the in-store customers. For this would provide insights into how to encourage them to become proactive performers in co-constructing their own retail experiences.

1.1 Research Aim and Objectives

This research is aimed at developing a better understanding of the relationship between the consumers' stock of sociocultural aspects of operant resources and the co-creation of their retail experiences. In particular, it explores and examines the roles of the consumer-to-sales person interaction in facilitating resources integration. The research objectives are listed as follows:

- To examine how individuals act as proactive performers in co-constructing the shopping experience with the staff in retail stores.
- To explore different elements of the consumers' stock of operant resources that people deploy with the sales personnel.
- To discover the detailed value-in-use process regarding how resources are deployed and integrated.
- To investigate the outcomes associated with human interaction and service experience co-creation.

1.2 Research Questions

In order to achieve the research aim, four research questions are put forward:

1. Through what way(s) do consumers co-create their retail experiences with the sales personnel in retail stores?
2. What are the detail elements of the consumer's operant resources that individuals deploy during consumer-to-sales person interaction?
3. What is the process of the retail experience co-creation during consumer-to-sales person interaction?
4. What are the outcomes that are caused by consumer-to-sales person interaction?

1.3 Contributions

An important contribution of this research is the notion that it extends the Service-Dominant Logic perspective to develop a better understanding of the relationship between the consumer's stock of sociocultural operant resources and the co-creation of experience through the lens of the consumer-to-sales person interaction. In particular, this thesis aims to fill the following gaps in the extant retail literature.

First of all, although the current retail literature attempts to research the co-creative and key performative role of the consumer in the value and/or experience co-creation process, it has failed to examine the customer's detailed stock of social, cultural, and personal aspects of operant resources. Secondly, the dialogical interaction that has

been raised by Service-Dominant Logic scholars has been restricted to examining consumer-to-store ambience interaction and the consumer-to-sales person perspective of human interaction in facilitating value-in-use has tended to be ignored. In addition, the detailed process of how resources are deployed and integrated between the resource integrators needs to be addressed. Finally, offering entertaining and spectacular dimensions of the retail experience, and promoting the brand are the major goals of the retailer. However, there is a gap in the research regarding the personalised and unique shopping experience as well as the consumer side of the benefits and the establishment of long-lasting relationships.

1.4 The Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 contains a literature review, which provides in-depth discussions on the theoretical perspective underpinning this thesis, namely, Service-Dominant Logic. Subsequently, there is an examination of the evolutionary process of the consumer retail experience literature from the past to present approaches in comparison with the theoretical approach in order to identify the research gaps in retail study.

Chapter 3 discusses the philosophical and methodological paradigms of this work, the research methods, the data collection, the data analysis, and the research quality.

Chapter 4 presents analysis of the key findings based on the in-depth interviews and observations, covering three aspects. First, there is a consideration of the four aforementioned themes of the swapped life stories and their associated sociocultural, and personal values, meanings, beliefs, ideologies, and identities. Second, the

customer's side of benefits gaining, and relationship related outcomes that are caused by in-store story swapping are revealed. Finally, the detailed process regarding how role playing and role switching could facilitate value-in-use and thus convert a piece of past or present life experience into meaning, identity, and a solution, is probed.

Chapter 5 summarises the findings as well as highlights the contributions of this work, its implications, limitations, and puts forward avenues for future research.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The evolutionary approach of Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic) is deemed to be appropriate here for developing the consumer-centric perspective that customers are shifting from passive value receivers to active value creators, who deploy their knowledge, skills, life experiences, and other competencies to interact and collaborate with the company, employees, and other resource integrators across networks. Moreover, the role of the retailer plays in the value co-creation process is to provide value propositions in facilitating interactions. (Lusch et al., 2007; Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Therefore, the adoption of S-D Logic can facilitate this research to analyse how the existing literature on consumers' retail experiences construction has been shifting from a goods-centric perspective to a service-orientation. And importantly, the key principles and theoretical characteristics of S-D Logic provide assistant in the identification of the research gaps.

This chapter contains three sections. The first (2.1) provides the theoretical background to S-D Logic, and identifies the key characteristics in the underlying premises. The second (2.2), explores the evolutionary process of the consumer's retail experience literature in relation to the past approaches (1960s to late 1990s) according to the new marketing logic, whilst the third (2.3), identifies the research gaps by comparing current retail study.

2.1 Service-Dominant Logic Approach

The marketing paradigm has emerged into a new era, in which marketers and companies start to “do things with” customers rather than simply “market to” passive consumers (Lusch et al., 2007; Payne et al., 2009; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2006, 2008). Under this new marketing logic, consumers constitute operant resources for primarily co-creating value, entrepreneurs are considered as value proposition providers rather than value producers and distributors, and value is co-created through interaction and collaboration across networks that include: service providers, employees, other customers, and consumer communities (Lusch et al., 2007; Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2008).

2.1.1 Basic Concepts of Service-Dominant Logic

Vargo and Lusch (2004) reveal that marketing has evolved from Goods-Dominant (G-D) Logic to Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic) by summarising the evolution of the different schools of thought and their influence on marketing theory and practice over the past hundred years. That is, the marketing paradigm has shifted from “to market” orientation, in which marketing was viewed as the change of ownership and physical locations of products (Lusch et al. 2007), to a “market to” era, in which the marketplace and customers’ needs are analysed and goods are produced to satisfy these needs. In recent years, some scholars (e.g. Lusch et al., 2007; Payne et al., 2009; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008) have proposed that

marketing has emerged to being in a “market with” era. Under this new marketing logic, operant resources (i.e. a resource that is capable of acting on other resources) are the key elements of competitive advantage. That is, consumers constitute operant resources primarily for co-creating value, through collaboration with all professionals, service providers, and other customers in whole communities (Lusch et al., 2007; Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2008).

S-D Logic is grounded in ten foundational premises (FPs) (Figure 1), eight of which were initially conceptualised by Vargo and Lusch in 2004. Subsequently, these authors revisited the original FPs and added a ninth and tenth in 2006 and 2008 in order to capture the interactive nature between all related network members in the value-in-use process (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Taken together, these ten FPs constitute the essence of the new marketing logic, that is, “*service is the fundamental purpose of economic exchange and marketing, in other words, service is exchanged for service*” (Lusch and Vargo, 2006, p.xvii).

The central messages of the FPs are as follows. First, service is the fundamental basis of exchange (FP1). This recognises that the focus of exchange and competition has shifted from operand resources (tangible goods) to operant resources (knowledge and skills). For example, customers are viewed as operant resources under the new marketing concept, whereas goods are a distribution mechanism for service provision (FP3) (Merz et al., 2009; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Second, S-D Logic reveals that customers are co-creators of value (FP6), who participate in dialogue and interaction with firms during product design, production, delivery and consumption. Therefore,

the new marketing logic highlights a “process” orientation, in which value is generated through value-in-use rather than value-in-exchange (Merz et al., 2009; Payne et al., 2009; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Finally, FP8 and FP9 (the service-centred logic is customer oriented and relational) suggest that value is not only co-created between firms and customers, but also collaborated across all social and economic actors in the network (Vargo and Lusch, 2008).

Figure 1 Foundational Premises of Service-Dominant Logic

FP1	Service is the fundamental basis of exchange
FP2	Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange
FP3	Goods are a distribution mechanism for service provision
FP4	Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage
FP5	All economies are service economies
FP6	The customer is always a co-creator of value
FP7	The enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions
FP8	A service-centred view is inherently customer oriented and relational
FP9	All social and economic actors are resource integrators
FP10	Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary

Vargo and Lusch 2008, p. 7

Traditional marketing logic suggests that value is embedded in products and tangible goods, and customers are considered as operand resources (i.e. a resource to be acted on), who passively receive firm-provided value. Under this perspective, units of output are therefore viewed as central components of exchange and competition (Lusch et al., 2007; Merz et al., 2009). Vargo and Lusch (2004), in raising the concept of S-D Logic, challenged this traditional marketing perspective for being firm-centric and goods-oriented, thereby failing to identify the role of service in competition and

exchange. Service in the context of S-D Logic refers to the “*application of specialized competences (knowledge and skills) through deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself*” (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, p. 2). It can be summarised from the existing literature that S-D Logic contains three key characteristics. First, customers constitute operant resources and are endogenous to value creation. Second, the firm provides value propositions to facilitate interactive and collaborative behaviours. Finally, the value co-creation process is network-oriented, which requires all relevant resource integrators’ participation (Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008).

2.1.2 Operant Resources and Customers as Performers for Co-creating Values

The foundational premises of S-D Logic state that “*operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage*” (Vargo and Lusch, 2008, p. 7) and customers can always bring their operant resources to the value creation process, thus becoming the co-creators of value (FP6). The key distinction between Goods-Dominant Logic and S-D Logic is the recognition of operant resources. That is, under traditional goods-centred marketing logic, it was proposed that operand resources played key roles in competition and exchange as the focus was on tangible outputs and discrete transactions. Consequently, marketing was about changing the form, place, time and possession of products and delivering value to targeted customers, whereby goods and customers were considered as operand resources (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Since operand resources were to be performed and acted on, goods and consumers were therefore seen as having passive

positions, which hence were not capable of operating on other resources (Constantin and Lusch, 1994; Lusch et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

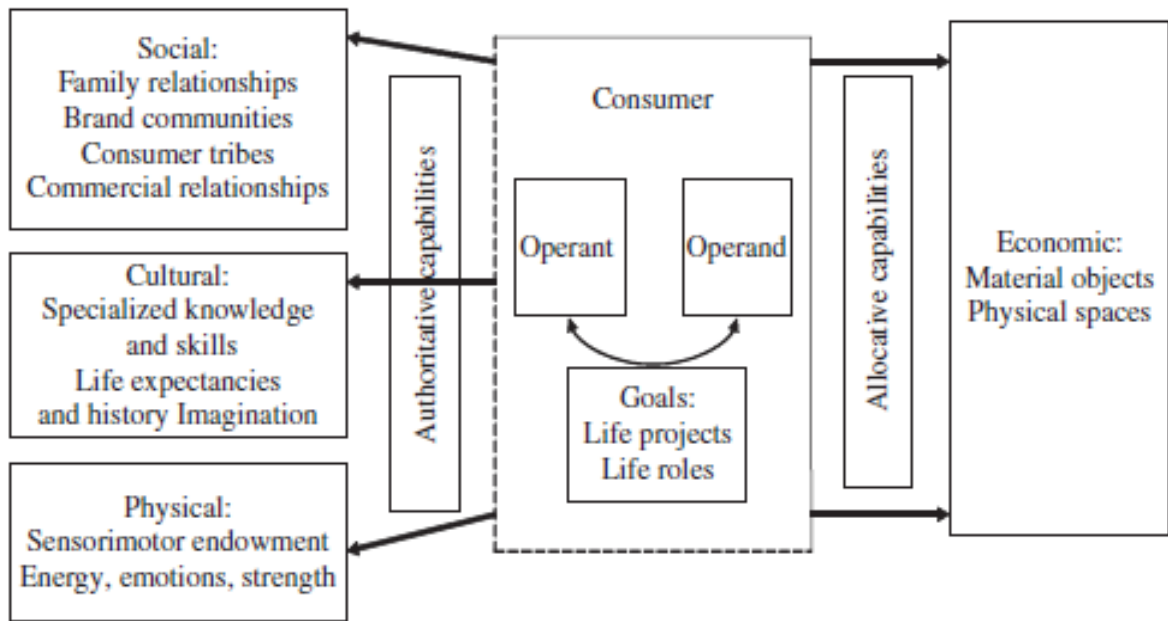
Early on in the 20th century, functional school scholars (e.g. Cherington, 1920; Weld, 1917) started to recognise the existence of operant resources and became interested in investigating how institutions could perform marketing functions and add value to goods. In comparison with operand resources, operant resources are “*dynamic resources such as competences (skills and knowledge) that are capable of acting and producing effects in both operand and operant resources*” (Lusch et al., 2007, p. 8). The increasing focus on intangible goods (e.g. knowledge and skills) has driven marketers to reconsider the roles of marketing, goods, and more importantly consumers. For instance, the proponents of the evolutionary marketing approach have claimed that goods are transforming from operand resources to operant resources, and that they have become “*intermediate ‘products’ that are used by other operant resources (customers) as appliances in value-creation processes*” (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, p. 7). Moreover, under the goods-oriented marketing perspective, the producer and the consumer were normally considered as “*ideally separated in order to maximum manufacturing efficiency*” (Vargo and Lusch 2004, p. 11). That is, customers were seen as passively receiving company-provided goods and services and would not wish to participate in different parts of the business system, such as product design, production processes development, marketing, and sales channels control (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

However, in recent decades marketing has started to emerge from “doing things to” customers to “doing things with”. This emerging perspective indicates that marketing philosophy has evolved into being seen as a social and economic process, in which production and consumption have become inseparable, where producers can no longer determine and distribute value to customers, and consumers have become active participants in the co-producing and relational exchanging of value with the firm. Under this lens, value is viewed as being created through “value-in-use” rather than “value-in-exchange” (Lusch et al., 2007; Merz et al., 2009; Payne et al., 2009; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000; Vargo, 2008; Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

2.1.3 Social and Cultural Aspects of the Consumer’s Operant Resources

It is understood that the key feature of S-D Logic is that the customer constitutes operant resources primarily to co-create value with all the professionals, service providers, and other customers of whole communities (Lusch et al., 2007; Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Merz et al., 2009; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Arnould and his colleagues (2006) reviewed and defined the customers’ stock of operant resources after fleshing out the nature of the consumers’ side of the partnership, in terms of the range of socio-culturally embedded resources they can deploy in the value-in-use process, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 The Customer's Operant and Operand Resources



Arnould et al. 2006, p. 92

This figure shows customers' stock of operand resources (the right side) and operant resources (the left side). Some researchers have pointed out that these two resource types consistently interact with each other to shape customers' life projects and goals (Sewell, 1992; Swidler, 1986). Moreover, customers' operand resources are tangible and include culturally constituted economic resources (e.g. income, inherited wealth and credit), which can facilitate their achieving their goals by interacting with firm-provided operant ones (Arnould et al., 2006). The left side of Figure 2 shows customers' operant resources (i.e. social, cultural, and physical aspects) and regarding these, Arnould et al. (2006) stress *"since customers' life projects/goals are a configuration of operant resources, focus on these operant resources will enable firms to anticipate customers' desired values and help them create value in use"* (p. 93).

First of all, some researchers have addressed how consumption behaviours are shaped by social class, ethnicity, gender, and families. Meanwhile, consumer behaviours have also been concerned with collective ways in which brand communities, consumer tribes, and fan communities co-produce subcultures and values (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Arnould et al. (2006) stress that these values and beliefs generated from social structures and tribal groups can be integrated as consumers' social operant resources, and consumers can differentially deploy their strong and weak social ties with others to affect choices on brands, product types as well as co-creating value and experience.

Figure 2 shows there are two groups of relationships that construct consumers' social operant resources: traditional demography groups (e.g. families, ethnic groups and social class) and emergent groups (e.g. brand communities, consumer tribes, subcultures and peer groups). Following this concept, some researchers suggest that consumers should be viewed as enactors of social roles and positions (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Otnes et al., 1993), whose intangible competencies are constructed by their social hierarchy, gender, ethnicity, and other habituated social categories. Moreover, when they interact with firm-supplied resources and other resource integrators, these forms of operant resources can be employed by the consumers to influence: individual consumption behaviours, attitudes, and experiences. For example, consumers' shopping preferences can be influenced by their social class (Holt, 1997, 1998).

Another group that contributes to the social aspect of operant resources is the community-based network of relations. With respect to this, it can be understood that consumers who interact with brand communities or consumer tribes can possess this kind of social operant resource, and could bring it to the value-in-use process. Moreover, community members who share the same beliefs, meanings, rituals, and mythologies gather together, both offline and online, to exchange and share important information about the brand, its products, and the consumption experience (Arnould et al., 2006; Arnould and Thompson, 2005). The consumer communities, tribes, and groups can consequently evoke co-consumption behaviours, and generate collective values and consumer cultures. Subsequently, the co-produced cultural schemas can facilitate individuals' consumption of the brand, its products, and service offerings in creative ways and also allow them to interpret the consumption experience "properly" (Cova and Cova 2001, P.34). Arnould et al. (2006) stress "*co-creative experience of the product or brand is enhanced, but – of equal significance – schemas are sustained and or reproduced over time through operant resources that accumulated through these enactments* (p. 94).

The second source of customers' stock of operant resources is cultural. Under the S-D Logic perspective, consumers are considered as co-creators of value, with their knowledge, skills and other intangible resources being the key elements of competitive advantage (Lusch et al., 2007; Payne and Frow, 2008; Vargo and Lusch, 2006, 2008). Some scholars have also developed a focus on examining consumers' knowledge and skills, revealing the cultural dimensions of operant resources as being

“varying amounts and kind of knowledge of cultural schemas, including specialised cultural capital, skills, and goals” (Arnould et al., 2006, p. 94).

Finally, the third type of customers’ operant resource is the physical perspective, which includes sensorimotor endowment, energy, emotions, and strength. Consumers can employ their physical and mental endowment to co-create value with firm-provided offerings and other parties’ resources, and these, in turn, can affect their life roles and projects. Arnould et al. (2006) claim *“the low stock of physical resources and the consequentially different life goals may prompt the consumer to adopt different strategies in employing their own and the firms’ operant resources”* (p. 93). For example, people who lack sight might deploy more of other types of physical operant resources or they might exert authority over social operant resources, such as asking a friend or a family member to assist them (Arnould et al., 2006).

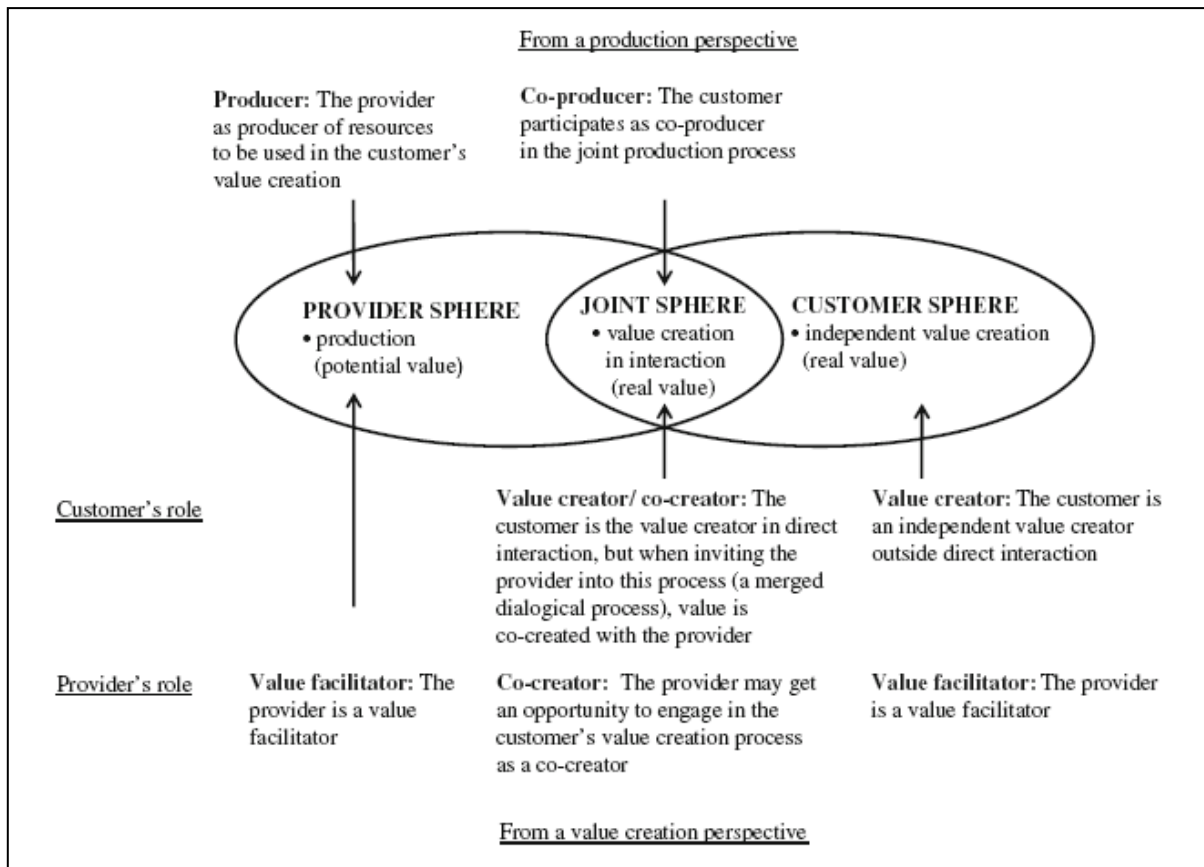
2.1.4 The Firm as Value Proposition to Facilitate Interactions

In recent years, some scholars (e.g. Echeverri and Skålen, 2011; Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Grönroos and Ravald, 2011) have addressed the crucial role of interaction in value co-creation. Grönroos and Voima (2013) contend that co-creation is a function of interaction, which is considered as a dialogical process, with both the customer and the company being active performers in activating and integrating their resources and processes into a coordinated and merged process (Ballantyne, 2004; Ballantyne and Varey, 2006). Previously, the active roles of the consumer, provider, or other resource

integrators in the process of interaction were not explicitly explored. However, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) indicate that *“the use of interaction as a basis for co-creation is at the crux of our emerging reality”* (p. 5) and as such, *“co-creation functions by activating operant resources, though no studies have clearly defined the roles of the service provider and the customer or the nature, scope, and locus of this value co-creation process. To do so, it is necessary to consider the meaning of interaction”* (Grönroos and Voima, 2013, p. 134).

Grönroos and Voima (2013) have analysed the roles of the provider and customer by categorising these two resource integrators into two spheres to explain how value is co-created by the firm and the customer. These value creation spheres are shown in the following figure.

Figure 3 The Provider and Customer's Value Creation Spheres



Grönroos and Voima 2013, p.141

The provider sphere refers to the situation that the company is responsible for producing resources and processes for individuals to integrate, such as providing the design, development, manufacturing, and delivery for potential value-in-use. Therefore, the role of the firm is considered as the value facilitator, which assists future resource interaction with the consumers (Grönroos, 2008, 2011; Grönroos and Voima, 2013). On the right hand side is the consumer sphere and the importance of the role of the customer has been explicitly explored over the years (Epp and Price, 2011; Heinonen et al., 2010; Voima et al., 2010; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008; Woodruff and Gardial, 1996). Grönroos and Voima (2013) designed the customer

sphere to emphasise resources, and processes that a consumer, individually and independently creates as well as collectively in “*social, physical, mental, temporal, and/or spatial contexts*” (p. 142).

The intersected area of the provider and consumer spheres is the joint space where direct interaction happens and resources are integrated between the company and the consumer. Within the dialogical process of direct interaction, the customer is the key performer and the firm acts as the co-creator influencing the value co-creation process of the consumer (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). However, there are risks that the co-creation will not occur and that the level of value destruction increases as the resources that are provided by the firm might not be welcomed by the consumer and they might not be in a receptive mood for engaging with the firm in co-creating value (Echeverri and Skålen, 2011; Grönroos and Voima, 2013). In order to reduce these risks, the company needs to gain more knowledge about the resources, processes, and outcomes that are created by an individual independently in the sociocultural context regarding the customer sphere. The employees, in this case, can play a crucial role in effectively communicating and interacting with the customer to facilitate the resource in use between the firm and the consumer (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Gummesson, 1991). By so doing, the firm is also able to learn more about the resources and/or practices that a consumer deploys or combines in the joint sphere.

According to one of the foundational premises of S-D Logic: “*the enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions*” (Vargo and Lusch, 2008 p. 7). In this

case, the suppliers and the consumers should be considered in a relational context and the latter is the primary co-creator of value (Lusch et al., 2007; Frow and Payne, 2011; Vargo and Lusch, 2006, 2008). The importance of the value proposition concept in the value co-creation process has been highlighted in recent works on S-D Logic (e.g. Frow and Payne, 2011; Kowalkowski, 2011; Vargo, 2008, 2011). In addition, “*consumers are always collaborators of value*” has become a popular concept in contemporary marketing literature and S-D Logic research (Bendapudi and Leone, 2003; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Lusch et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008).

From the early 1900s onwards, marketing scholars drew up marketing philosophy from a microeconomic point of view, proposing that marketing was a change of possession and physical location of products (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). They believed value was embedded in manufacturing and commodities. Under this traditional marketing perspective, researchers and marketing practitioners suggested that suppliers should add value to products in the manufacturing process and thus, outputs and value-in-exchange should be the priority of the market system (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2006, 2008). However, S-D Logic scholars argue that goods should be considered as distribution mechanisms for service provision, rather than the common “denominator of exchange” (Vargo and Lush, 2004, 2008). That is, the existence of goods and products is to provide an “appliance” for the performance of services. Therefore, value cannot be solely produced and distributed by the company, for it is also created in the customers’ value generating process, and hence marketing developed a focus centred on the consumer (Grönroos, 2008; Lusch et al., 2007).

This consumer-centred approach promotes a “service” orientation, whereby companies are value foundation creators, who provide the necessary resources (e.g. goods, services, information or other resources) for consumers to use and also add their own operant resources (e.g. knowledge and skills) to the value creation process when they interact with these firm-provided goods or services. Regarding this, Grönroos (2000) states *“value for customers is created throughout the relationship by the customer, partly in interactions between the customer and the supplier or service provider. The focus is not on products but on the customers’ value-creating processes where value emerges for customers and is perceived by them,... the focus of marketing is value creation rather than value distribution, and facilitation and support of a value-creating process rather than simply distributing ready-made value to customers”* (p. 24-25). Therefore, suppliers should be perceived as value proposition providers, customers as value co-creators, and that value is consequently generated through the resources exchange of the two (Grönroos, 2006, 2008; Vargo and Lusch, 2008).

2.1.5 Value Co-creation Process is Network-oriented

According to Figure 1, the ninth foundational premise of S-D Logic proposes that *“all social and economic actors are resource integrators”* (Vargo and Lusch 2008, p. 7). Under the goods-dominant perspective, marketing scholars, such as McCarthy (1960), believed some uncontrollable elements, such as the external environment (i.e. legal, competitive, social, physical, technological, etc) could not be adapted, but rather only utilised by companies. However, under S-D Logic marketing should be considered as

a societal process rather than an organisational one, since the uncontrollable environmental variables can be integrated by all the partners in the network that are collectively co-creating value (Lusch et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

During the earlier stage of Vargo and Lusch's (2004) research on S-D Logic, networks and interactions tended to be implicit. However, these authors later modified their original work and addressed more explicitly the network nature of resource integration (Frow and Payne, 2011). As a consequence, in recent years marketing scholars have tended to focus more on stakeholder interactions and the experiential aspect of resource integration (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Moreover, from the mid-2000s onwards, some researchers (e.g. Achrol and Kotler, 2006; Grönroos, 2006; Gummeson, 2006) pointed out that research on S-D Logic was restricted to studying firm-to-consumer interactions, with the importance of networks and the interactive nature of value co-creation having been underestimated.

Therefore, Vargo and Lusch (2006, 2008) revisited their previous research based on the foundational premises (FPs) and add the ninth ("*all social and economic actors are resource integrators*") to the original set in order to capture interactions between social actors and exchange across networks in the co-creation process. This modification implies "*the context of value creation is networks of networks*" (Vargo and Lusch, 2008, p. 7). In other words, value is co-created through the collaboration of all professionals, service providers, and other customers of whole communities (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2008).

In the meantime, branding scholars suggested that brand value creation should be considered as a dynamic, interactive, and social process that requires all stakeholders' collaborations (Merz et al., 2009). This paradigmatic shift in thinking was driven by the brand community literature, such as the HOG (Harley-Davidson) rally (McAlexander et al., 2007), Star Wars fans (Brown et al., 2003), and Apple Newton fans (Muniz et al., 2005). Merz et al. (2009) highlight the collective and interactive nature of brand communities as *“a brand community consists of specific set of customers who may or may not own the brand, but who are part of a collective social unit centered on the brand and who adhere to the marketers of community: consciousness of kind (intrinsic, felt connection among members), presence of shared rituals and traditions, and sense of moral responsibility”* (p. 337).

Within a brand community, group members share some essential resources, which can be cognitive, emotional, or material. They also share consumption experience, information about brands, companies and products, both direct and indirectly, and consequently can enhance the brand image or loyalty (McAlexander et al., 2002; Merz et al., 2009). Research on brand communities illustrates increasing attention on “consumer empowerment” (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000), whereby they are treated as partners to co-opt their competence with the supplier and the brand (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006). In addition, brand community study has elicited that brand value is co-created by all members in the community, who collectively interpret the meaning of the brand and brand-related information based on their personal and impersonal experiences about it (Merz et al., 2009).

This network orientation in marketing and branding indicates that not only firms and customers are the major parties in the co-creation process, but it also involves brand community members, consumer tribe members, and other non-customer and non-brand community forces (e.g. McAlexander et al., 2002; Merz et al., 2009; Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001). A consumer community and/or consumer tribe is enriched with customers’ operant resources (e.g. social and cultural resources) since it is “*a group of people who have a common interest in a specific activity or object and who create a parallel social universe (subculture) ripe with its own myths, values, rituals, vocabulary, and hierarchy.*” (Cova and Dallı, 2009, p. 322).

These consumer communities evoke we-intentions and increase the willingness of the community as a whole. We-intentions are considered as: “*(1) mutual responsiveness among participants to the intentions and actions of others; (2) collective commitment to the joint activity; and (3) commitment to support others involved in the activity*” (Cova and Dallı, 2009, p. 322). In this case, the group-based meaning negotiation and collective nature of experience creation suggest that marketing and branding have been evolving toward a network-oriented process.

2.2 Past Research on the Construction of the Consumers’ Retail Experiences

As discussed in the section of 2.1, over the decades, the marketing paradigm has shifted from a “to market” focus, in which marketing was about changing the ownerships and physical locations of goods to a “market with” orientation, whereby

operant resources are the key elements of competitive advantage and value is co-created through the collaboration of all the professionals, service providers, and other customers of the whole communities, and consumers are co-creators of value (Lusch et al., 2007; Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). In parallel with the emerging logic of marketing, retail atmospherics and consumers' retail experiences study is also shifting from a goods-orientation approach to a service-grounded perspective, in which customers have been changing their roles from being isolated to connected, unaware to informed, and from being passive to active.

2.2.1 The Recognition of Operant Resources, and the Key Roles of the Consumer in Retailing

Between the 1960s and 1990s, in parallel with the S-D Logic approach in marketing, the retail environment study was also shifting from goods-orientation towards a process orientation, and the evolutionary process emerged from the study of in-store customers and environmental cues as operand resources (e.g. Cox, 1964; Kozan and Evanson, 1969) to one that recognised consumers as operant resources, and hence that the store atmospheric design should be built to satisfy their experiential and emotional needs (e.g. Chebat and Michon, 2003; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Mattila and Wirtz, 2001; Yalch and Spangenberg, 2000). Even though the consumers had started to be recognised as operant resources, it can be argued that they were still considered to be in passive and immersive positions whilst receiving their retail experiences.

About 50 years ago, retail scholars started to analyse the influences of physical environmental settings on consumers' purchasing behaviours (e.g. Cox, 1964, 1970; Smith and Curnow, 1966; Kotzan and Evanson, 1969). However, individuals were considered as passive value receivers and operand resources were the centre of the research. In the 1980s, marketers and practitioners began to research customers' experiential needs and emotions. Regarding this, the Merabian-Russell model drawn from environmental psychology has been widely utilised by retail scholars to examine how environmental design could affect the individual's pleasure, arousal, and dominance dimensions of emotions, and then as consequences, how these emotional responses could lead to approach or avoidance behaviours (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Turley and Milliman, 2000).

The major contributions of environmental psychology have been, first, the focus on customers' emotional and experiential needs has meant that consumers have started to be studied as operant resources rather than operand ones, and value-in-use has begun to be acknowledged as a fundamental basis of exchange. Secondly, research on crowding and employee characteristics (Bateson and Hui, 1987; Hui and Bateson, 1991; Yalch and Spangenberg, 1988) indicates that goods have become a distribution mechanism for service provision, and customers have begun to be viewed as value co-creators.

2.2.1.1 Goods-orientation and the Customer's Retail Experience

During the period of the 1960s to the 1970s, the function of the marketing system was to analyse and research customers' needs and wants, and goods were produced to satisfy both the needs of customers and the marketplace. Therefore, it was goods-oriented and marketers did things to customers (Lusch et al., 2007). In the 1960s, retail academics (e.g. Cox, 1964, 1970; Smith and Curnow, 1966; Kotzan and Evanson, 1969) inherited this "market to" philosophy and started to study the effects of store environments on consumers' experience and behaviours. Research during this period was mainly focused on studying how the physical arrangements (e.g. shelf space) influenced customers' shopping experience and thus their purchasing behaviours. For example, Cox (1964) and Kozan and Evanson (1969) evaluated the relationship between shelf space and product sales, and they discovered that the shelf space design could influence sales, but not impulse buying. Meanwhile, Frank and Massey (1970) and Curhan (1972) examined shelf rows, shelf level and shelf space on sales and unit sales.

In addition, the literature started to show an interest in studying the influences of sensory aspects of atmospherics design, such as music, like when Smith and Curnow (1966) investigated the relationship between this and sales as well as time spent in the store. In the early 1970s, Kotler (1973, 1974) extended the store atmospherics concept based on the marketing management school of thought that marketing was a decision making and problem solving function (Kotler, 1967, 1973; McCarthy, 1960; Turley and Milliman, 2000; Vargo and Lusch, 2004), arguing that "*atmosphere is*

apprehended through the sense” (Kotler 1973, p. 50). Compared with the earlier stage of atmospherics study on shelf arrangements, Kotler (1973) developed a focus on studying the sensory aspects of environmental design, including the sight (colour, brightness, size, and shapes), sound (volume and pitch), olfactory (scent and freshness) and touch (softness, smoothness, and temperature) aspects. However, Kotler’s approach to store atmospherics tended to be goods-oriented as he perceived the store atmosphere as a “primary product” (Kotler 1973, p. 48), and that its manipulation could influence consumer decision making.

2.2.1.2 Environmental Psychology and the Customer’s Retail Experience

Since the beginning of the 1980s, the marketing paradigm has shifted from a marketing management focus to a social and economic process (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). This new approach has meant that marketing has started to emerge towards a “service” orientation, in which operant resources are paramount and customers’ co-creative roles have been acknowledged (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Marketing literature during this period was mainly driven by service marketing (Grönroos, 1984; Zeithaml et al., 1985), experiential marketing (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Schmitt, 1993), relationship marketing (Berry, 1983; Duncan and Moriarty, 1998; Gummesson, 1994, 2002; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2000), resource management (Constantin and Lusch, 1994; Day, 1994; Hunt, 2000), and so forth. Vargo and Lusch (2004) posit that compared with the previous approach that marketing was about satisfying consumers’ needs by the manipulation of the marketing mix, the evolving marketing philosophy emphasises how knowledge, skills and other competencies are exchanged and integrated by the firm and its customers.

In parallel with the evolution of the marketing concept, retail theory has begun to acknowledge the existence of intangible resources in the value-in-use process. This perspective is shown in the studies of consumers' emotional needs and experiential aspects of consumption. That is, as retail markets have become increasingly competitive, scholars and retail practitioners have come to realise that consumers seek more of their experiential consumption benefits and emotional connections with retailers rather than just being rational decision makers. Therefore, competitive advantage has come to rely more on providing a pleasant or even exciting shopping environment rather than simply manipulating: in-store merchandise, pricing, or convenience (Baker et al., 1992; Dawson et al., 1990; Morrison et al., 2010; Schmitt, 1993).

In the early 1980s, the environmental psychology approach started to be adopted by retail scholars to investigate how environmental cues provide value propositions to facilitate emotional connections between the retailer and its customers and consequently influence their purchasing behaviours. For instance, Donovan and Rossiter (1982) introduced the Mehrabian-Russell environmental psychology model into the retail context to investigate the environment-behaviour relationship with a focus on emotional responses. Under the Mehrabian-Russell framework, researchers have mainly focused on examining either a single atmospheric variable (e.g. music or aroma) or combinations of several environmental cues (e.g. aroma and crowding, music and aroma) on consumers' emotional responses (i.e. pleasure, arousal, and dominant) and consequently, their attitudes, approach or response behaviours (Baker et al., 2002; Beverland et al., 2006; Chebat and Michon, 2003; Donovan and Rossiter,

1982; Jones et al., 2006; Michon et al., 2005; Turley and Milliman, 2000; Yalch and Spangenberg, 2000).

Apart from addressing consumers' emotional needs, retail researchers have also begun to pay attention to the nature of human resources, and have integrated human factors as one of the retail environmental categories affecting in-store shoppers' emotions, behaviours, and experience (Baker, 1986; Berman and Evans, 1995; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Turley and Milliman, 2000). Baker's (1986) research considers more about social factors' effects and conceptualises the multiple sensory dimensions of store atmosphere, suggesting that the physical environment can be divided into three categories: ambient factors (e.g. music, scent and noise), design factors (e.g. colour, texture and layout), and social factors (e.g. service personnel, number or appearance of other customers). Moreover, Turley and Milliman (2000) summarise previous research of atmospheric typology (e.g. Berman Evans. 1995; Bitner. 1992) and highlight the human factors (e.g. employee characteristics, crowding, and customer characteristics) involved in contributing to the store atmospheric categories.

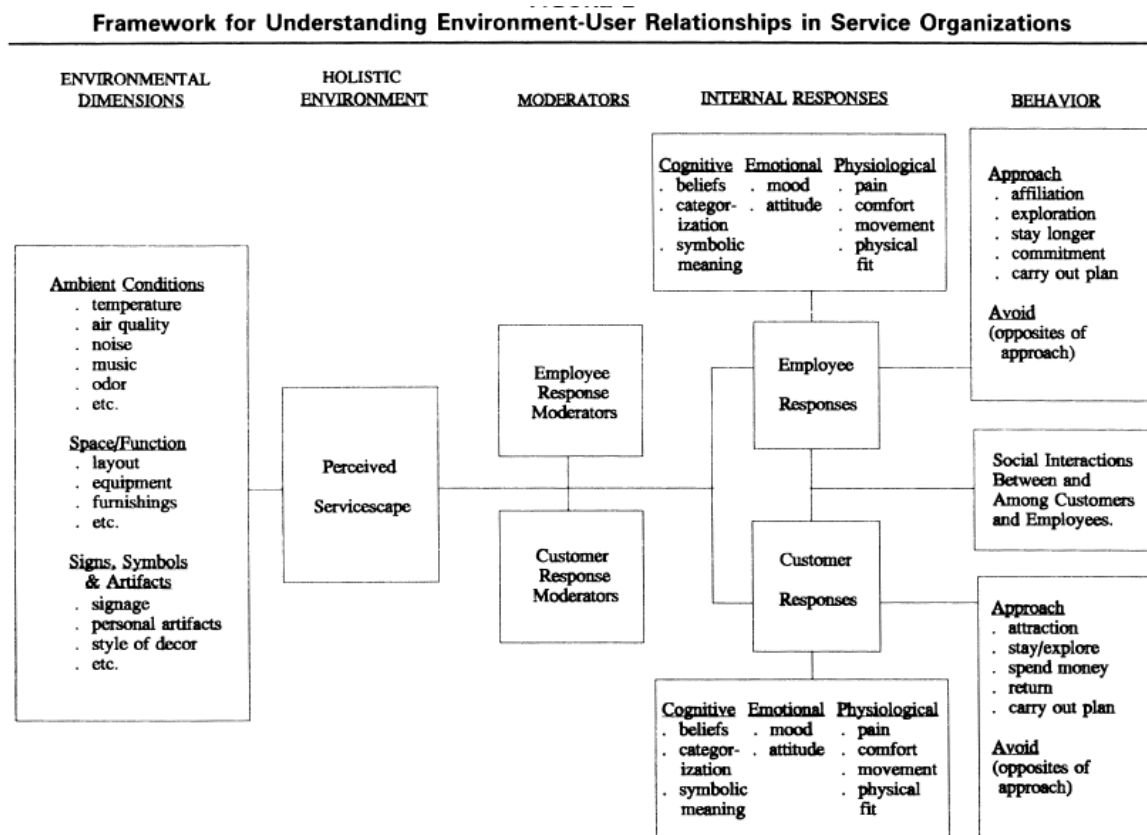
2.2.2 The Recognition of the Sociocultural Aspect of Value and Experience, and the Consumer-to-Employee Interaction in Retailing

Since the beginning of the 1990s, servicescapes researchers have come to realise the existence of social, cultural, and meaning dimensions of an individual's consumption experience and have started to research how retail places should be designed to

produce social and personal meanings and values to consumers (Arnould et al., 1998; Bitner, 1992). Moreover, servicescapes scholars have also acknowledged that store atmospherics can be utilised to facilitate interactive behaviours between consumers and employees, especially in service organisations (Bitner, 1992).

Bitner (1992) claims servicescapes represents “*a subset of social rules, conventions and expectations in force in a given behavioural setting, serving to define the nature and scope of personal experiences and social interactions*” (p. 62). Along with this definition, Bitner (1992) also conceptualises a framework to explain how physical surroundings have impacts on the behaviours of consumers and employees as well as the interpersonal interactions between the customers and staff (ibid). A framework of the servicescapes is shown in the following figure (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Framework for Understanding Environment-User Relationships in Service Organisations



Bitner 1992, p. 60

First of all, under the servicescapes lens, it is contended that atmospherics not only affect customers and employees emotionally, but also influence them cognitively and physiologically. Figure 6 shows a variety of environmental surroundings (i.e. ambient conditions, space/function, and signs, symbols and artifacts) that can generate both customers and employees' cognitive aspects of internal responses, which include: beliefs, categorisation and symbolic meaning. For example, the design of store atmospherics could alter a potential customer's beliefs about a product (e.g. perfume) sold in the store (Gardner and Siomkos, 1986).

Moreover, environmental factors, such as the size, type and quality of an office's furniture could influence a staff member's beliefs about his/her position and importance within the company (Bitner, 1992). Arnould et al. (1998) state "*places generally have meanings and values for persons, indeed may serve as the foci for the production of socially and personally significant meanings, intentions and purposes. Thus servicescapes may sometimes transcend their commercial intent, making manifest a range of non-commercial social and personal potentialities of action and outcome*" (p. 90). The focus of servicescapes on meanings transfer and production provides evidence that retail literature has begun to evolve towards a consumer-centric perspective, accepting that consumption experience is culture enriched and meaning-laden.

Secondly, servicescapes proponents have developed a focus on evaluating social interactions between and among customers and employees, rather than simply examining approach (e.g. affiliation, exploration, and stay longer) and avoidance (opposite of approach) behaviours. Barker (1968) claims particular environmental settings can always predict social behaviour patterns. "*Empirical studies confirm the impact of physical setting on the nature of social interaction. Behaviors such as small group interaction, friendship formation, participation, aggression, withdrawal, and helping have all been shown to be influenced by environmental conditions*" (Bitner, 1992, p.61). Bitner (1992) further gives an example of social interactions in the context of a service organisation, claiming that seating arrangements in a restaurant can encourage interactive behaviours among customers, as well as contacts between the consumers and the chef, if he or she cooks the food in full view.

Some researchers (e.g. Arnould et al., 1998; Cohen, 1988, 1989; MacCoannell, 1973) point out that servicescapes contains two staging aspects: substantive and communicative. Substantive staging relates to the physical settings of contrived environments, such as, the interiors of a French restaurant or cafe being designed around Parisian culture and lifestyles. Communicative staging, on the other hand, refers to the “*transmission of servicescape meaning, both those directly related to service delivery and those transcending the instrumental context*” (Arnould et al., 1998, p. 90). From this it can be seen that this form of staging places more emphasis on the intangible and cultural aspects of the environmental factors, such as, a French restaurant providing customers menus in French and employing French-speaking waiters or waitresses. Cohen (1989) suggests that communicative staging can facilitate the meaning transfer from the service provider to its customers, from customers to customers, and from the customers to the provider.

Arnould et al. (1998) indicate the interactions between the consumers and employees are considered as one of the crucial elements of communicative staging. They conducted research by focusing on how river guides and customers’ interactions could assist the former to interpret cultural themes with rafting experiences when they consume the wilderness. In particular, these writers claim that “*successful service delivery in complex elaborate servicescapes may rely heavily on the communicative and performative skills of highly involved service providers*” (p. 111). The highlighting of the “communicative staging” of servicescapes demonstrates that under this lens service providers are acknowledged as one of the important atmospheric elements, seen to contain rich operant resources, having the capability to transfer

knowledge and skills, and able to communicate effectively with audiences about the social and cultural aspects of meanings and consumption.

2.2.3 Limitations of Past Research on the Consumer's Retail Experience

Construction

Under S-D Logic, it is assumed that value is created through the consumers' value-generating process rather than firm provided goods or services. This perspective has been built based on ten foundational premises (FPs) and these FPs indicate that S-D Logic contributes to three key features, which are: first, the marketing focus has shifted from analysing operand resources to operant resources, whereby, in particular, the consumers are considered as operant resources (Lusch et al. Merz et al., 2009; Payne et al., 2009; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Second, customers are co-creators of value, who participate in dialogue and interaction with firms during consumption. That is, it highlights a "process" orientation, in which the function of the firm is to provide goods and services to facilitate the value-in-use process (ibid). Third, co-creation is network-oriented and requires the participation of all social and economic actors to make value (ibid).

In parallel with the new marketing approach, the retail literature in researching the relationship between store atmospherics and the consumption experience has also evolved from a goods-oriented perspective to the recognition of operant resources during the period of the 1960s to 1990s. With much store atmospherics study having

involved the adoption of an environmental psychology approach, this shows that retail philosophy has shifted to having something closer to a “service” orientation. First of all, the focus on customers’ emotional and experiential needs indicates they have started to be studied as operant resources rather than operand ones, and value-in-use has started to be acknowledged as the fundamental basis of exchange. Second, research on crowding and employee characteristics (Bateson and Hui, 1987; Hui and Bateson, 1991; Yalch and Spangenberg, 1988) illustrates that goods have come to be considered as distribution mechanisms for service provision, and that customers are now viewed as value co-creators.

However, it can be argued that the environment psychology approach seems to have followed the Goods-Dominant perspective since retail scholars have neglected the fact that co-creation is about resource interactions and collaborations between the consumer and his/her related parties, and the function of the enterprise is to provide value proposition for resources in use. That is, the consumers are still considered, by and large, as passive value receivers rather than proactive value co-creators. Moreover, some scholars have turned their attention to the roles of employees in the retail store (e.g. Turley and Milliman, 2000), considering them as a category of the physical environmental settings rather than operant resources that are capable of acting on the consumer’s stock of competences.

Complementary to the environmental psychology perspective to studying the affective and experiential dimensions of the personal competencies of the consumers (Donovan

and Rossiter, 1982; Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Turley and Milliman, 2000), servicescapes is another approach that has been widely researched by retail scholars since the early 1990s. Under this lens, it is posited that atmospherics can not only affect customers and employees' emotionally, but also influence them cognitively and physiologically. Bitner (1992) points out a variety of environmental surroundings (i.e. ambient conditions, space/function, and signs, symbols and artifacts) can generate both customers and employees' cognitive aspects of internal responses, which include: beliefs, categorisation, and symbolic meaning.

Moreover, servicescapes scholars have also acknowledged that store atmospherics can be utilised to facilitate interactive behaviours between consumers and employees, especially in service organisations (Bitner, 1992). Important contributions of the servicescapes approach are: first, the recognition of the social, cultural, and meaning dimensions of the consumption experience and that research on how retail places should be designed to produce social and personal meanings and values to consumers (Arnould et al., 1998; Bitner 1992). Secondly, both customers and employees are integrated as operant resources and their interactions can facilitate the meaning transfer.

However, it can be argued that the early stage of the servicescapes study had the same drawback as the environmental psychology approach, that is, there was the view that retailers are responsible for producing and delivering value, and customers are passive value receivers, hence their in-store experience is, by and large, determined by the

company. As a consequence, the roles of the consumers and their rich competencies, and the value creation process were examined as having a separate relation.

2.3 Current Research on the Co-creation of the Consumers' Retail Experiences, and Research Gaps

From the late 1990s onwards, retail scholars started to extend the S-D Logic perspective to examine the proactive roles of the consumers, and their social, cultural, and ideological aspects of consumption behaviours as well as the interactive function of store atmospherics in the value co-creation process. A review of the literature on themed environments suggests that mainstream research has focused on examining how retailers could embed social and cultural meanings into these retail environments, and thus construct the consumers' spectacular shopping experiences as well as promoting the brand (e.g. Kozinets et al., 2002; Peñaloza, 1999; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Sherry, 1998; Solomon, 1983; Wolf, 1999). The key contributions of the themed retail environments study can be concluded as: first, it has begun to acknowledge consumers as co-creators in collectively constructing values and experiences with retailers. Secondly, it has developed a focus on investigating the roles of store design as value propositions to facilitate interaction.

However, recent retail studies on themed retail settings have placed the main emphasis on firm-offered physical and cultural aspects of store designs, such as technological, functional, aesthetical, mythical, and ideological elements. Moreover,

this literature has tended to focus on analysing consumers' retail experiences construction through the interactive behaviours between the in-store consumers and the physical environmental settings. Consequently, it can be argued that the current retail approach has neglected the following three areas: first, evaluation and identification of the consumer's stock of rich social and cultural operant resources. Second, investigation of the consumer-to-employee perspective of human interaction in co-creating the consumer's retail experience as well as examination of the detailed value-in-use process on how resources are deployed and integrated. Third, exploration of the personalised retail experience that can capture the uniqueness and individuality in consumers.

This section contains six subsections, in which 2.3.1, 2.3.3, and 2.3.5 illustrate and explain what the current approaches are in terms of the consumer's retail experience construction, whilst subsections, 2.3.2, 2.3.4, and 2.3.6 map out the research gaps.

2.3.1 Current Approach: Retailer Provided Spectacular, Entertaining, and Sociocultural Aspects of Resources

In the early 1980s, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) proposed that experiential consumption could involve a steady flow of fantasies, feelings, and fun. This experiential approach was "*phenomenological in spirit and regards consumption as a primarily subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses, and aesthetic criteria*" (p. 132). Meanwhile, other researchers (e.g.

Gottdiener, 1997; Lindgreen et al., 2009; Wolf, 1999; Schmitt, 1999; Kozinets et al., 2002) also suggested that the experiential, memorable, grandiose, spectacular, entertainment, and fantasy aspects of elements play important roles in constructing the contemporary consumption experience of individuals.

From the late 1990s onwards, servicescapes scholars began to conduct research examining how themed retail spaces could be leveraged in constructing consumers' experience and enacting brand (e.g. Kozinets et al., 2002; Peñaloza, 1999; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Sherry, 1998; Solomon, 1983; Wolf, 1999). The research mainstream has focused on examining the impacts of themed retailing, brandscapes, flagship brand stores, themed entertainment brand stores, themed flagship brand stores, and brand museums. The major contributions of these studies can be concluded as: first, they have developed a focus on investigating the entertainment, fantasy, and culture elements of the constructed consumption experience. Second, they have begun to acknowledge consumers as co-creators in generating value and experience. Retail scholars have given a variety of names and definitions to theatre-generated retail environments. In the earlier stages, "themed environment" (e.g. Gottdiener, 1995, 1997, 1998), "brandscape" (e.g. Sherry, 1998), and "consumption spectacle" (e.g. Peñaloza, 1999) were commonly studied. Gottdiener (1995, 1998) points out themed settings have become increasingly important for commercial spaces since the United States has more and more become an "entertainment economy" and hence, Gottdiener (1997) suggests that these should offer "*entertainment while stimulating the transformation of individuals to commodity-craving selves*" (p. 75).

Sherry's (1998) research on Nike Town introduced the idea of "brandscape", defined as *"a material and symbolic environment that consumers build with marketplace products, images, and messages that they invest with local meaning, and whose totemic significance largely shapes the adaptation consumers make to the modern world"* (p. 112). Nike Town was also studied by Peñaloza (1999), but with a different theoretical approach and unlike Sherry's (1998) use of the term "brandscape", he identified Nike Town as a "consumption spectacle", which means *"a postmodern market performance that involves consumer participation, exaggerated display, and the amplification of social values with an emphasis on knowledge of its mechanics of production as part of the experience"* (p. 339).

Kozinets et al. (2002) fleshed out the concept of "themed brand stores". These authors claim *"flagship brand stores – not dot coms – will develop the most successful experiments blending virtual and real worlds. Virtual commerce will enhance the place-based appeal of stores that display, divert, delight, and deify through the use of retail theatre"* (Kozinets et al. 2002, p. 18). These new forms of retail stores primarily provide customers a combination of holistic and brand experience. They are designed not only to promote products or increase sales, but also to allow individuals to experience the brand, the company, and its products (Borghini et al., 2009). Kozinets et al., (2002) identify three major types of brand-related stores: flagship brand store, themed entertainment brand store, and themed flagship brand store.

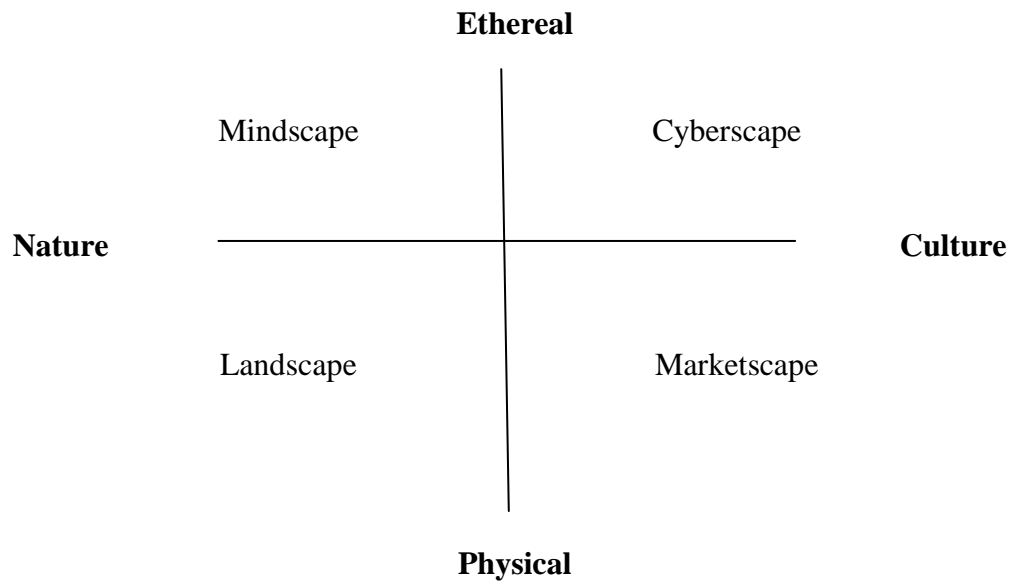
The first type refers primarily to stores that sell their own brand and products, with the manufacturer having ownership and the aim is to enhance the brand image rather than making profits. These stores can be exclusive outlets for a manufacturer's brand and nonexclusive brand stores. Examples of exclusive flagship brand stores include The Body Shop, Old Navy and Banana Republic, whereas nonexclusive brand stores where retailers try to promote their brands include Tommy Hilfiger, Louis Vuitton, and Nike Town (Kozinets et al., 2002). The second type, the themed entertainment brand store, focuses on selling services rather than products, with entertaining customers and building the brand-consumer relationship being the major purpose (Kozinets et al., 2002) and examples of which are American girl place (e.g. Borghini et al., 2009) and Hard Rock Café (Pine and Gilmore, 1998).

The final type of brand store is the themed flagship brand store, which is a more complex entity when compared to previous two types (Kozinets et al., 2002), for it is a combination of the two. That is, it aims to offer consumers entertainment-oriented services and earn profits by selling these services. For example, the Coca-Cola brand museum located in Atlanta is a themed flagship brand store with a museum-like setting, which charges consumers admission fees and sells brand-related products (Hollenbeck et al., 2008). The store aims to educate customers about the brand history and to facilitate in-store visitors to connect themselves to the brand identities (ibid). In addition, a themed flagship store can be used to encourage interactions between consumer play, agency, and retail spectacle (Hollenbeck et al., 2008). Kozinets et al.'s (2004) research about ESPN Zone found that the marketer provided customers a spectacular environment that was surrounded by screens and other high technology

facilities, giving the customers “*freedom to explore the self and social relationships within the marketer constructed boundaries of commoditization and commercialization*” (Hollenbeck et al., 2008, p. 336).

In general, themed retail environments are mainly designed to provide customers spaces where entertainment, fantasy, and play as well as social and cultural themes serve as the major means of consumption. Kozinets et al. (2002) stress “*blending fantasy with reality will increasingly occur as retailers recognize that branding is a magical affair in which fact and dream must merge together*” (p. 18). These authors further propose that since fantasy elements have become more important in constructing retail experience, a framework that could classify, organise, and analyse the cultural associations behind the types of fantasy retail environments is essential. Figure 5 shows four types of retail themes that could represent the fantasy elements in a themed retail setting.

Figure 5 Four Types of Retail Themes



Kozinets et al. 2002, p. 19

Figure 5 illustrates four types of retail themes (i.e. landscape, marketscape, cyberscape, and mindscape) determined by two dimensions. The horizontal one ranges from “*natural*” to “*cultural*”, which refers to the apparent malleability or tractability of the retail theme, and the vertical one ranges from “*physical*” to “*ethereal*”, which portrays the tangible or material quality of this theme (Kozinets et al., 2002). According to these authors, first of all, landscape is associated with images of nature, earth, animals, and the physical body. An example of a landscape retail theme could be an outdoor environmental design. Second, a marketscape theme relates to images of different cultures, manmade places, and buildings. Third, a cyberscape theme includes information and communication technology as well as a virtual community. For example, how a company employs technology to design its online retail interface. Finally, a mindscape theme refers to abstract ideas, concepts, introspection, and fantasy (Kozinets et al., 2002).

According to Kozinets et al. (2004), ESPN Zone Chicago can be considered as a sports-oriented themed flagship brand store, which contains a combination of all these four types of retail themes (i.e. landscape, marketscape, cyberspace, and mindspace). This “sports-and-dining entertainment complex” mainly offers diners ludic resources (e.g. videogames, video monitors, and sports-and-Chicago themed artworks) to encourage them to “play”. *“These facilities provide a new form of stage that enables consumers to breach fantasy and reality, to transcend physical limitations, and to conjure the iconic spirits of the celebrity pantheon”* (Kozinets et al., 2004, p. 668). Moreover, *“consumers draw brands and products into their fantasies. By playing on this playfulness in new ways, information technology allows an entrée into fantasy life of the consumer, entailing a sophisticated use of meaningful symbols”* (Kozinets et al., 2004, p. 20).

Apart from the entertainment, fantasy, and play dimensions of retail space construction, other visceral elements, including culture, mythologies, and narratives, have also been integrated by retailers to characterise consumers’ shopping experience. Regarding this, Servicescapes scholars have raised the idea that a variety of retail environmental surroundings could generate customers’ cognitive aspects of responses including: beliefs, categorisation, and symbolic meaning interpretation. Therefore, retail places should be designed to allow the customer to associate themselves with the social and cultural dimensions of consumption experiences (Arnould et al., 1998; Bitner, 1992). This culture and meaning-oriented approach of servicescapes proponents has been extended by themed retail scholars. That is, they point out that themed retail environments aim to deliver customers a holistic shopping experience

that is not only enriched with entertaining, and playful elements, but also with consumer cultural resources. Consequently, some academics have come to realise that understanding the symbolic meaning and culture associated with brands and branding has become a fundamental objective of contemporary consumption research (e.g. Brown et al., 2003; Diamond et al., 2009; Holt, 2004; Thompson et al., 2006).

2.3.2 Research Gap: The Details of the Consumer's Stock of Social and Cultural Operant Resources

It can be understood from the previous discussions that the focus of retailers and scholars has been on the investigation of how cultural resources and narratives are embedded into spectacular retail environments, and how these themed retail stores can stimulate customers to deploy their knowledge and skills to interpret the meanings of their experiences and thus co-create brand meanings and identities (Arnould, 2005; Borghini et al., 2009; Diamond et al., 2009; Hollenbeck et al., 2008; Kozinets et al., 2004). Under this optic, the retailers are in the dominant positions in creating value, and the construction of the consumers' retail experiences is based on the fact that the latter act upon the firm-provided resources. Therefore, it is considered essential in this research to build up a consumer-centric perspective by conducting in-depth investigations that reveal the different types and elements of the consumer's stock of operant resources.

Arnould et al. (2006) flesh out the consumers' side of the partnership in terms of the range of socio-cultural enriched operant resources that individuals might bring with them to the value-in-use process. These authors suggest there are three types of such resources. First, networks of relationships including traditional demographic groups (families, ethnic groups) and emergent groups (band communities, consumer tribes, and subcultures), which are considered as consumers' cultural operant resources. Second, specialised knowledge and skills, life expectancies and history imagination comprise people's cultural resources. Third, sensorimotor endowment, energy, emotions, and strength are defined as physical resources (ibid). It is thus concluded that Arnould et al.'s (2006) conceptualisation of consumers' stock of operant resources provides a strong theoretical background for the development of a consumer-oriented approach to examine these consumer side rich value-creative competencies in the context of retailing.

In particular, among these three types of the consumer's stock of operant resources that have been identified by Arnould et al. (2006), the community perspective of competencies are of particular interest for this thesis, since S-D Logic scholars have increasingly drawn attention to the perspective that value creation should be considered as a dynamic, interactive, and social process that requires all stakeholders' collaboration (Merz et al., 2009; Vargo and Lusch, 2006, 2008). If this is the case, an individual who interacts with brand community members, consumer tribe members, and other non-customer and non-brand community forces can bring the community-oriented operant resources to the value-in-use process, and thus indirectly co-create the network-centric retail experience. Therefore, it is fruitful to identify and examine

how the collectively constructed knowledge and values are activated and collaborated with by a consumer in the context of retail stores.

2.3.3 Current Approach: The Consumer-to-Physical Retail Atmospherics Interaction

The research focus of theatre-generated retail environments demonstrates that retail scholars have started to pay attention to studying the proactive roles of consumers in co-constructing retail experiences and co-interpreting the social and cultural meanings through interacting with the physical store atmospheric settings. This shift to a consumer-centric point of view in this literature was strongly influenced by the evolutionary approach of Service-Dominant Logic that consumers are operant resources in co-creating value (e.g. Lusch et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2006, 2008). Moreover, other scholars (e.g. Arnould, 2005) suggest the evolving retail paradigm should be based more on consumer culture theory, since “*consumers bring to bear operant resources – interpretive and productive capacities organized into templates for action and interpretation.*” (p. 91) and therefore, the retail places should be designed “*in the combinations of cultural resources that firms produce and those that consumers favour*” (p.93).

Research on theatre-generated retail environments, such as Nike Town (e.g. Peñaloza, 1999; Sherry, 1998), ESPN Zone (Kozinets et al., 2004), the Coca-Cola brand museum (Hollenbeck et al., 2008), and American Girl Place (Borghini et al., 2009;

Diamond et al., 2009) has developed a focus on analysing how retail places should be designed around economic, utopian, ludic and temporal aspects of cultural resources, so that the themed retail environments can stimulate customers to activate their stock of knowledge and skills to interact with firm-provided store atmospheric surroundings that are enriched with sociocultural resources and narratives. In this case, the consumers have become active performers, who physically interact or “play” with the store settings, and consequently co-interpret the meanings out of their experiences and co-create brand meanings and identities (Arnould, 2005; Borghini et al., 2009; Diamond et al., 2009; Hollenbeck et al., 2008; Kozinets et al., 2004).

In the early stages of study about consumers’ co-created roles and interactive behaviours with physical store environmental settings, Arnould et al.’s (2001) research developed a focus on exploring how individuals become actual performers, who participate in the experience and meaning co-creation process by deploying their stock of social and cultural competencies when they visually interact with the institutional semiotics of advertising flyers that are designed with an enriched blend of: frugality, family, religion, neighbourhood, community, and national norms in Wal-Mart stores. These firm-provided in-store designs offer utopian cultural resources in order to associate with customers’ pursuit of a utopian concept that the world is imagery, mythic, and the ideal of perfection as well to promote a “*a nostalgic hometown, and a place rich in American mythology*” (Arnould et al., 2001, p. 243).

Kozinets et al.'s (2004) ethnographic study of the themed flagship brand store, ESPN Zone Chicago, also suggests a co-creative way of consumers in constructing their experience in the store. The retailer provides high technology facilities and a “do-it-yourself” store environment to allow individuals to engage holistically in their own constructed projects, enthusiastically enact and build the brand as well as to co-create their identities. For example, the consumers’ visual interactions, based on the bright coloured and large sized architectural cues in the themed store, associate them with the sporty and masculinity aspect of the male identity. In addition, the Sports Arena in the store provides in-store consumers a range of sports-oriented video games, such as touch football or basketball and these store-provided ludic resources can activate customers’ pursuit of play, thus transforming them into proactive performers. As a result, the physical performance evokes a sense of fantasy as well as the male gender role and identity (Kozinets et al., 2004).

Hollenbeck et al.'s (2008) study on the Coca-Cola brand museum is another example where the consumers have become performers, who actively interact with the physical store environmental settings to co-construct the brand, in-store experiences, and identity. The authors claim that the museum-like spectacle of this brand museum is designed around educational, historical, aesthetical, and cultural perspectives. Four major galleries aim to increase the engagement through participatory activities between the individuals and the physical sociocultural surroundings. In this case, people who visit the Coca-Cola museum can gain knowledge and history about the brand, associate their self-concept with the brand image, and co-interpret the meanings of the brand including: humanisation, socialisation, localisation,

globalisation, contextualisation, theatricisation, and characterisation (Hollenbeck et al., 2008).

Furthermore, Borghini et al. (2009) suggest retailers should be aware and compete for shares of customers' cultural resources and therefore they should provide desirable, but scarce, resources for consumers to accomplish the pursuit of their life projects. That is, the purpose of the retailer in the interaction and collaboration of cultural resources should be to engage with consumers and thus become part of their identity creation endeavours. Borghini et al.'s (2009) research on American Girl Place aimed to examine how consumers co-create their own shopping experience as well as brand ideology by engaging and immersing themselves in the retailer-provided culture enriched store spectacle. The supply of a rich, social, moral, and meaning-laden consumption environment in this themed brand store can transport customers to other times and places. This is because, the six different and distinct areas within the store (i.e. the museum, library, café, salon, theatre, and photo studio) contain a range of myths, narratives and stories that encourage customers to get involved in the value-in-use process.

2.3.4 Research Gap: The Consumer-to-Employee Interaction, and the Detailed Value-in-Use Process

The extant retail literature can be criticised for having paid too much attention to evaluating the interactive behaviours between the consumers and the physical aspects

of store atmospheric design, thus neglecting the crucial role of social interactions between in-store shoppers and employees in co-constructing consumers' retail experiences, values, identities, ideologies, and meanings of consumption. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to explore how the dyadic interactive behaviours between the customers and sales personnel assist the researcher to discover the consumers' stock of operant resources, and what the resources-in-use process is through these direct human interactions.

Some Service-Dominant Logic scholars point out employees play important roles in the value co-creation process (e.g. Lusch et al., 2007; Payne et al., 2008) and Lusch et al. (2007) contend that employees should be utilised as operant resources rather than operand ones. *“When employees are viewed and treated in this manner they become empowered in their role as value co-creators. Employees as operant resources become the primal sources of innovation, organizational knowledge, and value”* (p.15). Over the years, the importance of interpersonal interactions and the functions of sales personnel have increasingly drawn the attention of marketing scholars. This interactive nature between consumers and employees has largely been addressed by the “service encounter” and “servicescape” perspectives (e.g. Bitner, 1992, 1994; Bitner et al., 1990; Solomon et al., 1985; Surprenant and Solomon, 1987).

It can be argued that the extant literature has tended to focus on the study of consumer-to-ambience interaction, thereby neglecting the consumer-to-employee aspect of such interaction and how the human communication can facilitate resource

integration. Kozinets et al. (2004) carried out their research on mediascapes of ESPN Zone Chicago to investigate how high technology screen-generated “play” in retail spectacles encourages customers’ in-store performance to interact with the firm-provided resources as well as other in-store consumers. This venue portrays the retail environment as being both staged (by performing sales people) and a stage (in-store facilities invite customers to perform for one another). However, in this work the consumers and employees are examined in separated relationships (ibid).

Moreover, Hollenbeck et al. (2008) paid attention to the function of in-store staff and the interactive behaviours between the World of Coca-Cola brand museum employees and visitors. They mention the employees are integrated to personalise the brand, and this is achieved by storytelling between “tour guides” and visitors in the brand museum. These authors further point out that the task of the tour guides is to educate the customer about the historical and cultural aspects of the brand, and most notably, they are trained to tell their “Coca-Cola stories” and ask in-store visitors questions about their experiences with the brand. Even though in their article employees are identified as operant resources in the value-in-use process, and it is accepted that the human interactions assist the firm in shaping brand meanings and images, it can be argued that the consumer received service experience is firm-centric, since the storytelling and sharing is brand designed and scripted (ibid). Therefore, there remains a need to conduct in-depth examinations on how resources are shared, exchanged, and integrated between the consumers and sales people in stores.

Furthermore, at the American Girl Place, there are six different areas the: museum, salon, theatre, library, photo studio, and the café (Borghini et al., 2009). The consumer-to-employee interactions were hardly investigated within these places in the store, with the authors having put much more weight on addressing consumers' connection with physical store designs. Nevertheless, Borghini et al. (2009) did elicit that the salon and the café were built for socialisation and interpersonal interaction. That is, the beauty hair salon is a public place, where professional doll hair stylists are on hand to not only fix the damaged dolls' hair, but also provide female “*grooming and maintenance tips*” (Borghini et al., 2009, p. 376). However, these authors only briefly mention the function of the salon is to evoke the result of interactions between the staff and customers as well as among consumers by sharing personal and family stories.

Apart from the lack of research on the consumer-to-employee perspective of the interactions, the extant retail literature also tends to neglect evaluation of the detailed process of value-in-use through the dialogical process. Service-Dominant Logic scholars often put emphasis on the role of value-in-use as a process that facilitates the co-creation of value (e.g. Frow and Payne, 2011; Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Gummesson, 1991; Lusch et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2006, 2008). Moreover, the existing retail literature has tended to probe the resource integration nature of the consumer's retail experience co-construction (e.g. Borghini et al., 2009; Diamond et al., 2009; Hollenbeck et al., 2008; Kozinets et al., 2004). However, the detailed process on how resources are deployed, interact, and integrated between the value co-creators is yet to be examined.

2.3.5 Current Approach: The Spectacular Aspect of the Retail Experience, and the Promotion of the Brand

Firat and Venkatesh (1995) raised the fact that marketers should utilise spectacle to overwhelm customers, and that the entertaining aspect of an experience allows the company to engage and connect with its customers in personal and memorable ways (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Nowadays, creating superb customer experience is considered as one of the key objectives in retailing environments (Verhoef et al., 2009). Kozinets et al. (2002) suggest experiential, grandiose, spectacular, entertainment, and fantasy aspects play important roles in constructing contemporary retail environments. Hollenbeck et al. (2008) state “*retail spectacles are structured, manufacturer-controlled retail environments where entertainments serves as the primary means of consumption*” (p. 334). Over the years, numerous researchers and retailers have developed a focus on how retail store atmospherics should be designed to deliver playful and spectacular retail as well as extraordinary experiences.

For example, Sherry (1998) conducted his research on Nike Town and described a themed retail environment as a “*material and symbolic environment that consumers build with marketplace products, images, and messages that they invest with local meaning, and whose totemic significance largely shapes the adaptation consumers make to the modern world*” (p. 112). Under this lens it is believed that the narrative design and cultural ideas of a retail store can facilitate customers to rework the meaning and ideologies of the brand and thus channel their experience (Arnould and Price, 1993; Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Peñaloza, 2000; Sherry, 1998). In

addition, the Coca-Cola brand museum located in Atlanta is built around art, culture, and historical features. As pointed out above, the aim of this store design is to educate customers about the brand history, provide brand meaning, and to co-create brand identity (Hollenbeck et al., 2008).

2.3.6 Research Gap: The Personalised and Unique Retail Experience, and the Consumer-oriented Outcomes

According to the above discussions, scholars and practitioners have mainly been concerned with building customers' experiences in the context of themed retail environments, and that these firm-provided retail settings assist the company to achieve two primary goals: first, shaping a pleasant or overwhelming experience for customers; second, selling brand-related products in an entertaining context as well as building brand loyalty, creating brand images, and delivering brand meanings to the clientele. Hence, it is essential to build a consumer-centric point of view when exploring the customer's side. That is, it is salient to examine the personalised and unique perspectives of the consumer's retail experience by prioritising their operant resources that are constructed through their personal everyday lives.

Surprenant and Solomon (1987) fleshed out that the service encounter and in particular, how the dyadic interaction between the consumer and the employee, can facilitate personalised service. These authors stress "*personalized service refers to any behaviours occurring in the interaction intended to contribute to the individuation of*

the customer. That is, the customer role is embellished in the encounter through specific recognition of the customer's uniqueness as an individual over and above his/her status as an anonymous service recipient" (p. 87). Nowadays, marketers have increasingly realised the uniqueness and differences in consumers and hence conduct various strategies to personalise the service or products (Kotler and Keller, 2006). For instance, some companies claim that they try to be "personal" to their customers by knowing and calling them by their names rather than treating them as order numbers, or email addresses. Moreover, the Starbucks coffee chain has trained their employees in the UK coffee stores to ask their customers' names and put them on the coffee cups from 2012, in order to appear more friendly and personable, thus showing that they are acknowledging individuality (BBC, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to explore how to leverage sales personnel as socially and culturally enriched resources to construct the personalised and unique aspects of the retail experience with consumers, rather than simply relying on designing theming and spectacular experiences.

Summary

The introduction of S-D Logic in marketing by Vargo and Lusch (2004) helped focus the attention onto the consumer. Under this lens, operant resources are paramount, and individuals are considered as active value co-creators, who are willing to interact and share their knowledge, skills, and other competencies with the company and other related parties (Lusch et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). S-D Logic also raises the matter of "interaction". That is, marketing is viewed as a social and economic process in which the firm is considered as a service provider that offers a platform for

resource integration and transformation for: customers, employees, the company, and other stakeholders (Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Lusch et al., 2007). Therefore, the key principles of S-D Logic allow for a focus in this thesis on three criteria: first, customers are operant resources and performers for co-creating value. Second, the firm as value proposition to facilitate interactions. Third, the value co-creation process is network-oriented.

According to the summary above, the crucial issues after drawing on S-D Logic are: consumer's performative roles, operant resources, and interaction. Taken together, these can facilitate this research to gain a holistic view of consumers' retail experiences construction, thereby acknowledging the shift from the goods-centric perspective to one of service-orientation. Moreover, these are the key factors that need to be addressed in this research as they constitute current gaps in the literature.

Since the 1980s, the environmental psychology and servicescapes perspectives have acknowledged the consumers' side of operant resources, whereby environmental cues can act as a tool for retailers to generate their emotions, deliver meanings, and facilitate in-store interactions. About twenty years later, servicescapes scholars began to show growing interest in examining spectacular shopping environments, including, themed ones (e.g. Gottdiener, 1995, 1998), "brandscares" (e.g. Sherry, 1998), "consumption spectacles" (e.g. Peñaloza, 1999; Sherry, 1998), "themed brand stores" (e.g. Borghini et al., 2009; Kozinets et al., 2002, 2004), and "brand museums" (Hollenbeck et al., 2008). Under themed retail environment study, the roles of

customers have started to be investigated as co-creators of value, and their in-store shopping experience has begun to be considered as a collective activity between the retailer and its customers. However, even though the current retail literature has started to pay attention to investigating the co-creation role of the consumers in constructing retail experiences, it can be argued that the retailers are still perceived as being in the dominant positions in creating, promoting, and emplacing spectacular store atmospherics, whereas the consumers only have choices of either to respond or resist, and thus it is the firm that is seen to manipulatively interpret brand meaning, image, and ideology.

Consequently, the retailer-provided resources, the consumer-to-store ambience interaction, and spectacular retail experience remain the key research focuses in these works. Therefore, it is essential to develop a consumer-oriented perspective in exploring and examining four key areas. First, how individuals act as proactive performers in co-constructing the shopping experience with the staff in retail stores. Second, different types of the consumers' stock of operant resources that people deploy with the sales personnel. Third, the detailed value-in-use process regarding how resources are deployed and integrated. Forth, the personalised and unique retail aspects of consumers' retail experiences, and other outcomes associated with human interaction and service experience co-creation.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter contains explanation and justification for why the ontological approach of this thesis privileges constructionism (section 3.1), the epistemological position is interpretivist (3.2), the methodological approach is hermeneutics (3.3), and the qualitative research methods favour in-depth interviews and participant observations (3.4). Section 3.5 covers how these in-depth interviews and observations were conducted. Finally, in sections 3.6 and 3.7 there is discussion on how the collected qualitative data was analysed and the main issues concerning the research quality.

3.1 Ontological Approach – Constructionist

Ontology is a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of being, i.e. the nature of reality (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988), whereas epistemology is concerned with knowledge and beliefs. In academic study, ontology refers to the relationship between the researcher and the reality (Carson et al., 2001), bringing forth questions on the meaning of social being and how knowledge can be acquired. Some philosophical traditions claim that ontology is distinct from epistemology, whilst other researchers support the view that these two branches of philosophy tend to merge together (Crotty, 1998), because “*the nature of knowledge depends on what which is known and, equally, that what can be known to exist depends on assumptions we make about how we know*” (Gabriel 2008, p. 95). The two main ontological positions are objectivism/positivism and constructionism (Bryman, 2012). Under positivist ontology, it is proposed that the social world that we live in is no different from the physical world and is separate from people’s perceptions and consciousness. That is, the nature of reality is as a single, tangible, objective, divisible and fragmental structure (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Therefore, conducting laboratory experiments and testing research frameworks and hypotheses are often adopted by positivists in order to measure and observe the objective reality (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988).

In contrast to positivist ontology, instead of believing that the nature of reality, social beings, and the construction of knowledge is single, objective, and fragmentable, the constructionist perspective highlights that reality is multiple, holistic, contextual, and socially constructed (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). In other words, there is no single

reality and there is no one correct way to get access to such realities, because reality is subjective “*essential, mental and perceived*” (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988, p.509), it being socially and culturally constructed. Under this lens, people adopt different theories, categories and other devices to make sense of their world and give meaning through cultural interaction (Gabriel, 2008; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Bryman (2008) stresses “*social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. It implies that social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but they are in a constant state of revision*” (p.19).

In this thesis, the constructionist ontological position is preferred to the positivist/objectivist approach, which is explained as follows. This research is to investigate how consumer retail experience, social and cultural value, and identity are co-constructed through the interaction between customers and sales people in retail stores. In this case, the individuals utilise consumption and service encounter to experience their lives as well as multiple realities, and the social and cultural aspects of meaning and personal experience are perceived through cultural interactions and subjective interpretations. Therefore, in this thesis the constructionist perspective is privileged since the multiple realities and customers’ meaningful retail experiences cannot be simply tested through running questionnaires, experiments, and hypothesis modelling (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Sherry, 1991).

3.2 Epistemological Approach – Interpretivist

Another philosophical branch is epistemology, and it raises questions such as “*what is knowledge? How can we acquire it? What are the different types of knowledge? And how can we absolutely be sure about that which we know?*” (Gabriel 2008, p. 95).

There are also two major positions associated with epistemology: positivism and interpretivism (Bryman, 2008). Under positivism, it is proposed that the researcher and his or her enquiry are considered to be separated and independent, and there are no relations between the person and the studied object. Therefore, the researcher will have no influence in the studied project and vice versa. Moreover, positivist researchers tend to take a time and context free generalising perspective when conducting their studies as well as to generate knowledge (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). In general, positivist researchers aim to “test” the “reality” by adopting empirical tests, surveys, hypotheses, and other experimental and manipulative methodologies (Bryman, 2008).

Interpretivism is an epistemological position that contrasts with positivism. Hudson and Ozanne (1988) identify the differences between the two being down to three epistemological assumptions, which are: how knowledge is generated, the view of cause and effect, and the relationship between the researcher and the research. First of all, positivists believe knowledge is generated through the application of facts and abstract laws to a considerably large amount of actions, phenomena, times, and contexts, and therefore allow for the creation of generalisation (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). However, interpretivists take various distinct factors into consideration when

generating knowledge in their quest to understand perceived reality, which can involve social, cultural, historical, and other particularistic elements. In addition, such researchers often seek to interpret specific meanings, reasons, and other subjective behaviours in a particular time and context (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Second, due to the generalisation aspect of positivism, positivists aim to explain and predict the world and thus focus on the identification of causal linkages. In comparison, interpretivists raise the idea that the world is complicated and subjective, therefore it is not possible to justify what the causes and the effects are (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Moreover, since reality is multiple, contextual, and socially constructed, if one tries to change one single part of it, then reality would be varied (Rist, 1977). Finally, positivists assume that the researcher and the research are independent of each other, and thus it is possible for the researchers to stand outside of their projects and not have much, if any, influence or control over them, whereas interpretivists claim that scholars should not be “outsiders” of their studies; they should interact and cooperate with their data and try to understand and interpret the social reality based on their perceptions and consciousness (Reason and Rowan, 1981; Wallendorf, 1987).

As discussed above, the ontological position adopted for this research is constructionist, because the consumer’s retail experience is socially and culturally constructed, being enriched with various meanings. Moreover, customers interacting and socialising with the sales personnel in the retail store experience multiple realities and lives that they have created independently and collectively according to their own social and cultural context. In addition, the aim of this research is to gain understanding about the individuals’ experiences and actions that are constructed in

retail environments, and employ my own cultural knowledge, skills, and experiences to interact with my research subjects so as to interpret the rich meanings, values, beliefs, and ideologies that are embedded in consumption. Therefore, interpretivism is the logical epistemological stance for the current investigation. Under this lens, owing to the need for the researcher to interact and engage with his or her data, issues about reflexivity have been emphasised by postmodernists. Reflexivity refers to the *“significance of the researcher for the research process and consequently the tentativeness of findings presented in a research report”* (Bryman 2008, p. 680). In order to avoid biased and unrealisable findings, the researchers are required to put their orientations, perceptions, social, cultural, and political views aside when attempting to understand the human actions, interpret them and to consider possible alternatives (Elliott et al., 1999).

3.3 Methodological Approach – Hermeneutics

Methodology refers to *“how can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known”* (Guba and Lincoln 1994, p. 108). In other words, the term methodology refers to how the research questions can be addressed (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). The methodology that is adopted in this study is hermeneutics, which has been increasingly applied in consumer research (Arnold and Fischer 1994). The meaning of hermeneutics has been evolving over the years, but the initial key idea underpinning it is to search for deep meanings through the analysis of texts from the author’s point of view (Bryman, 2008). Hermeneutics philosophers claim that understanding is viewed as interpretation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003), and

language is considered as a platform that facilitates understanding (Arnold and Fischer, 1994). Between the middle to late 20th century, philosophical hermeneutics proponents, such as Heidegger and Gadamer, challenged hermeneutics theory, taking an opposing position to the claim that “*understanding is not the objective recognition of an author's intended meaning. Instead, understanding is a practical task in which the interpreter is changed by becoming aware of new possibilities of what it is to be a human being*” (Arnold and Fischer 1994, p.56).

An important concept that has been introduced within hermeneutic philosophy is pre-understanding (Arnold and Fischer, 1994). As human beings, we carry socially and historically influenced prejudices or judgments, and hence interpreters should try to transcend these biased opinions and perceptions to achieve “*clear understanding*” (Denzin and Lincoln 2003, p. 301). Consequently, postmodernists have increasingly put emphasis on the term researcher reflexivity in order to avoid these biases and prejudgements that influence understanding and interpretation (Bryman, 2008). However, hermeneutic philosophers argue that understanding should not be separated from people’s orientations, prejudgments, or biases, because “*the attempt to step outside of the process of tradition would be like trying to step outside of our own skins*” (Gallagher 1992, p. 87).

Language plays an important role in the understanding process (Gadamer, 1989), for without it, communication through dialogue would not happen, and experiences would be difficult to express and comprehend. Meanwhile, Gadamer (1989)

emphasizes that language can always facilitate sense making of the world or social actions, and gaining understanding about past and present experiences. Moreover, language is a key that bridges researchers and texts, for it helps interpreters to understand the deep meanings that are already “*produced*” in them and dialogue (Denzin and Lincoln 2003, p. 302).

The choice of hermeneutics is relevant to the aim and objectives of this research for the following reasons. First, it is used to bring out rich meanings from texts, and this is beneficial to the interpretation and analysis of the collected in-depth interview data that are enriched with: human actions, personal stories, and socioculturally constructed meanings. Second, it focuses on language, driven by the notion that understanding is best provided through this mode of communication. Given that the research aims to gain insights into the consumer’s retail experience construction through human interaction (i.e. consumer-to-employee interaction), dialogue using spoken language is the crucial medium, which is then transcribed into written text. That is, the application of hermeneutics can assist the researcher in focusing on analysing conversation-related consumer behaviours, and thus interpreting the social and cultural meanings that are communicated through these interactions.

3.4 Research Methods – In-depth Interviews and Participant Observations

To recap, the ontological position of this thesis is constructionist, the epistemology position is interpretivist, and the methodological approach is hermeneutics. Therefore,

the positivist-related research methods, such as, survey/questionnaire collection, research model building or hypotheses testing are not considered as appropriate methods for this work. Bryman (2008) points out that interview and participant observation are the two main research methods that are commonly used in qualitative studies and hence, they are adopted for this work.

There are different types of qualitative interviews, with some researchers (e.g. Fitzgerald and Cox, 2002) arguing that the different forms should be divided into formal and informal. Other scholars (e.g. Bryman, 2008; Fontana and Frey, 1994; Leedy and Ormord, 2001) highlight that the interview structures can be structured, unstructured or semi-structured. Having reviewed numerous qualitative research studies, Berg (2007) comes to the conclusion that three categories of interview are available: standardised, semistandardised, and unstandardised. Of these three, the semistandardised is deemed the most appropriate form as explained next. Semistandardised interviewing, also referred to as semistructured or in-depth interviewing, is commonly deployed by researchers to conduct their studies (Bryman, 2008). In support of this, Berg (2007) points out that questions that the researcher asks in the semistandardised interview can “*reflect an awareness that individuals understand the world in varying ways*” (p. 95). That is, when this method is used, the researcher aims to gain understanding about the issues and events from the interviewee perspective (Berg, 2007).

For a semistandardised interview, the interviewer draws up a list of questions to ask on specific topics of interest, but the order of these questions can be changed during the interview, and the interviewees are encouraged to respond comprehensively and freely (Bryman, 2008). Moreover, the process is flexible in that the wording of questions can be changed and additional questions put to foster deeper inquiry into a matter of particular interest (Bernard, 2013). People who agree to participate in the interview normally do so for different reasons. According to Berg (2007), some of them might be eager to share their personal experiences with someone that they are unfamiliar with, whilst others may have the aim of gaining therapeutic benefits by sharing their stories and experiences or they just want to spend time with the interviewer since they are feeling lonely. Finally, the interviewees may be determined that particular topics are addressed (Berg, 2007). Each of these reasons is something the interviewee might want to either display or hide from the interviewer and hence the observer should be sensitive to this as well as “*reflect on each segment of the interview*” in order to ensure that he or she has some insights into the disposition of the interviewee (Berg 2007, p. 122). Further, when the informants are open to discussing their feelings and opinions, the interviewer should remain non-judgmental and avoid giving negative judgments through either verbal or visual means (Berg, 2007).

Apart from interviewing, another key method of collecting qualitative data is participant observation (Sander, 1987). That is, watching and listening is a useful tool for discovering and understanding various behaviours as well as for obtaining insights into cultural meanings regarding the group that is under study (Agafonoff, 2006;

Sander, 1987). Bernard (2013) summarises five advantages regarding how the conducting of participant observation can assist the researcher to understand better about the focal cultural group. First, it is possible to gather all sorts and types of data. Second, it can reduce the rate of reactivity when compared to interviewing, for under the latter circumstance people are more likely to be guarded in their behaviour. Third, it can assist the researcher to “*formulate sensible questions, in the local language*” (p. 317). Forth, it facilitates the researcher to gain insights about the cultural issues and events and thus gain better understating when he or she interprets accompanying interviews. Finally, it can help the researcher to map out the research focus (Bernard, 2013). Given the advantages of this method, it is chosen as the second strand of the methods employed in this research.

3.5 Data Collection

As explained above, two types of interpretive methods are integrated in this research: in-depth interviews and participant observations. In terms of the interviewing, two sets of interviews were conducted in order to interpret the socially and culturally constructed “reality” of the consumer’s retail experience. The first included 20 respondents and was aimed at exploring the consumer’s retail experience construction from their point of view. The second set was carried out after coding and theming of the first set and included 8 interviews designed to discover the individual’s shopping experience, as well as the service experience in the store from the employee perspective. Additionally, the aim was to investigate more specific and detailed areas of consumption activities, such as consumer-to-employee related interactive

behaviours. Furthermore, in conjunction with the two sets of interviewing, participant observations were carried out and fieldnotes were made.

Regarding the selection of the data collection venues, the first set of interviewing was conducted on Oxford Street in London, and the second was carried out in Manchester's Trafford Centre. The reasons why these two locations were selected are discussed in the following sections (i.e. 3.5.1 and 3.5.2). The main advantage of using more than one location to gather data is considered to avoid generalisation and thus to increase the credibility of the data, because the involvement of two data sources can facilitate this thesis to understand better about the consumers' shopping behaviours across different geographical places, demographics, and cultures.

However, the drawbacks of collecting these two sets of interviews from two different locations can be summarised as: since the London-based data collection was designed to gain understanding from the consumers' perspective, while the Manchester-based interviewing was geared to looking at the sales personnel's point of views, it is difficult to gain a dyadic view in understanding consumer-to-sales person interactive behaviours in one data source. In other words, the London-based interviews only involved sales representatives, and the Manchester-based ones only interviewed customers. In this case, it is uncertain if the other party in the same data collection venue (i.e. sales personnel in London, and customers in Manchester) agree with the interactive behaviours that were narrated by the informants. Therefore, there was the risk of misinterpreting the human behaviours and thus the co-created sociocultural meanings. Due to these limitations, this researcher had to analyse and compare all

possible discourses carefully to see whether they provided consistency and support for the interpretation provided.

3.5.1 Interview Collection 1 – From the Consumer’s Perspective

- **Key Criteria of Interview Collection 1**

In chapter 1, four research questions were presented to underpin this investigation, these being: 1) through what way(s) do consumers co-create their retail experiences with the sales personnel in the retail stores? 2) what are the detail elements of the consumer’s operant resources that individuals deploy during consumer-to-sales person interaction? 3) what is the process of the retail experience co-creation during consumer-to-sales person interaction? 4) what are the outcomes that are caused by the consumer-to-sales person interaction? These research questions provided guidance for setting up key criteria when conducting the first set of interviews.

First, since the consumer-to-sales person interaction has been drawn to the attention of this researcher, it was crucial to ask informants questions regarding their interactive behaviours with the sales assistants when they shop in retail stores. This included: what the consumers do when they engage with the sales personnel, what elements and practices constitute their pleasant/unpleasant service experiences, what the informants do/feel after they receive pleasant/unpleasant service experiences, and so on. Meanwhile, in order to keep an open mind, the informants were also asked about their interactions with the physical store atmospherics. By doing so, this would confirm or

refute the proposition that consumer-to-sales person interaction merits greater attention than consumer-to-store atmospherics interaction.

Second, since the research context of this study was to explore and investigate the customers' interactive behaviours in the retail environments, a range of retail environments needed to be covered by the informants, which included: high street retail stores, department stores, boutiques, supermarkets, bookstores, local shops (e.g. local groceries, bakeries, butchers and local markets), hardware stores, electricity stores and car dealerships. That is, the view was that this diversity of the retail environments discussion would allow this researcher to gain a holistic view of the research context.

Third, as the research focus of this thesis was to examine the consumers' shopping experiences construction. In order to increase stability or consistency of the explanations about consumers' interactive behaviours as well as their retail experiences construction, the informants were asked to give information and personal stories about not only their present shopping experiences, but also past as well as ideal ones.

- **Sample Size**

The first set of interviewing constituted in-depth interviews with 20 informants, 15 of whom were females and 5 males, with an age range between 19 and 52 years old. The demographic information of the informants is shown in table 1.

Table 1 Informant Details – Interview Collection 1

Informant	Gender	Age	Marital Status
1.Amanda	Female	26	Single
2.Amy	Female	38	Married
3.Ashley	Female	43	Married
4.Ben	Male	39	Single
5.Brian	Male	27	Single
6.Charlotte	Female	28	Engaged
7.Emma	Female	23	Single
8.Grace	Female	48	Single
9.Hannah	Female	48	Married
10.Isabella	Female	24	Single
11.Jamie	Male	37	Single
12.Jessica	Female	22	Single
13.Katie	Female	50	Married
14.Laura	Female	19	Single
15.Natalie	Female	52	Married
16.Rachel	Female	29	Single
17.Sarah	Female	43	Married
18.Sophie	Female	46	Single
19.Vanessa	Female	35	Married
20.William	Male	21	Single

These informants were randomly selected on Oxford Street in London and the reasons why the first set of interviewing was conducted here were twofold. First, as the capital city of the UK, London is a metropolitan and cosmopolitan city, and it is considered as having most urban and metropolitan areas, as well as a diverse range of people and cultures in the UK (The Economist, 2003). Second, Oxford Street is seen as one of the most popular shopping districts in England with more than 300 retail stores including designer and landmark outlets. Moreover, it also contains a range of department stores (e.g. Selfridges, Debenhams, John Lewis, etc), as well as high street stores (e.g. Topshop, Miss Selfridges, Forever21, etc) (Visitlondon, 2014).

- **Data Collection Procedure**

The 20 informants were approached, with me explaining to them the research purpose and inviting them to be interviewees. After gaining their permission, we arranged to meet in Cafés to carry out the interviews, and each interview lasted from 50 minutes to 2.5 hours. Ethical issues were addressed at the beginning of the interview (Thompson, 1989), for example, the informants were verbally informed that their information was only going to be used for research purposes and would be kept confidential.

Each informant was asked a board range of questions regarding his or her shopping experiences and to start with, they were asked some general questions, such as “what do you feel about shopping”? Later on, when the conversation was flowing more freely, further questions in relation to their personal experiences, attitudes, and expectations towards sales personnel as well as physical store settings were put. Regarding this, questions, such as “Please give me an example of a positive/negative service experience that you had last time”? were included in the interviews. There were no strict rules for the question format, however, all the questions were centred on three key scenarios, which were: 1) the consumer-to-sales person perspective of human interaction, as well as the consumer-to-store atmospherics aspect of physical interaction; 2) past, present, and expected future shopping experiences; and 3) retail experiences in different types of retail environment. For the details of the main interview questions please refer to Appendix I.

3.5.2 Interview Collection 2 – From the Employee’s Perspective

- **Key Criteria of Interview Collection 2**

After coding and theming the aforementioned 20 interviews from data collection 1, several key phenomena came to the surface, which centred on the interactions between the consumers and the sales personnel in the stores as well as their personal conversations about their lives. In conjunction with the interview collection 1, the second set of interviewing was ready to be conducted and the reasons behind the interview collection 2 are due to the following scenarios.

First of all, as identified earlier in the literature review chapter, this research was aimed at exploring and investigating how the human aspect of interaction between consumers and sales personnel could facilitate the value-in-use process. Given this, both the consumers and sales assistants were classified as key value co-creators. Although the first set of interviews could provide the interactive behaviours from the consumer’s perspective, the second was needed for the purpose of examining how the consumer’s retail experiences are co-created from the employee’s point of view. Moreover, having two different perspectives of the research data allowed for triangulation as the different responses by the informants could be cross-checked, thus increasing the credibility of the data.

Second, the data from the first 20 interviews revealed an important finding about the personal storytelling and exchanging aspect of behaviour between the customers and sales assistants. However, some detailed and specific information regarding the detailed conversation content between the two parties was lacking. For example, some of the informants would mention they had personal conversations with the sales people in the shops. However, what the conversation was like and what they talked to each other specifically about was not discussed. Given that two of the research questions were designed to discover various types and elements of the consumer's stock of social and cultural operant resources that he or she deploys during the consumer-to-employee interaction, as well as the detailed process of the human aspect of interactive behaviour, the second set of interviewing was deemed essential for comprehensively addressing these.

Third, the findings elicited from the first set of interview collection suggested that consumers like to talk with sales assistants about their family, gendered role, and the communities they belonged to. Therefore, better understanding from the employee's perspective regarding whether these three types of personal conversations were common occurrences in the store was deemed an important extension of the research locus. Moreover, this additional enquiry had the goal of finding out whether there were any other types of personal story that the consumers and sales representatives discussed during their interaction.

- **Sample Size**

With more specific questions prepared and purposes established, the second set of interviews was conducted. 8 interviews were carried out with people who were either full-time or part-time staff at the Nespresso store in the Manchester Trafford Centre, 4 of whom were males, 4 females, and the age ranged from 21 to 34. The demographic information for these eight informants is shown in table 2.

Table 2 Informant Details – Interview Collection 2

Informant	Gender	Age	Marital Status
1.George	Male	27	Single
2.Jade	Female	25	Single
3.Kim	Female	21	Single
4.Liam	Male	28	Single
5.Linda	Female	30	Married
6.Rose	Female	24	Single
7.Ralph	Male	34	Single
8.Tom	Male	24	Single

There are several reasons why I selected the Manchester Trafford Centre and the Nespresso store located inside of the shopping mall rather than carried out the interviews in London. First of all, Manchester is the third largest city in the UK as well as it is being a multi-cultured city (Young et al., 2006). Meanwhile, the Manchester Trafford Centre is the second largest shopping centre in the UK in terms of retail size (Wikipedia, 2013), and it not only contains a luxury department store (i.e. Selfridges & Co) and high-end brands (e.g. Armani, Vivienne Westwood and Burberry), but also has high-street brands and stores (e.g. Topshop, Zara, All Saints

and H&M). As a result, the customers who visit the centre come from different age groups, have different education levels, varying employment status, and a whole host of cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, considering the characteristics of Manchester Trafford Centre and its shoppers that are mentioned above, the involvement of this shopping mall as the second data collection venue can facilitate this researcher to gain a holistic view on the consumers' interactive behaviours, avoid generalisation, and thus to increase the credibility of the data.

Second, the Nespresso store located in the Manchester Trafford Centre is a service-oriented company that aims to deliver a supreme, personalised, and unique consumption experience to its target customers (Nespresso, 2013). Given this, it was expected that interviewing its employees would provide rich information regarding the consumer-to-employee aspect of interactive behaviours.

Finally, it was difficult to gain permissions from the stores managers in London in terms of interviewing their employees (i.e. sales assistants) as well as observing the in-store consumer-to-sales person interaction as the managers were concerned of commercial confidentiality. Therefore, a new interview location was needed. Due to the reason that I used to work at the Trafford Centre in Manchester, I had already built a rapport and trust with some managers and employees in various stores and therefore, it was easier to gain permission to contact the latter as well as to interview them.

- **Data Collection Procedure**

Some researchers, such as Burger (1992), claim that it is easier for people to share personal information when they have developed a relationship. Therefore, prior to the interview data collection, I worked to build trusting relationships with the employees. For instance, I sometimes went for lunch breaks with them and at other times I met them at a café for a casual chat after they had finished work. This rapport building was beneficial, because it not only helped me to discover things about the participants' private lives, but also helped me with the hermeneutics aspect of understanding their use of language prior to the interview stage.

There were no preferences in selecting informants. I chose them based on the informants' convenience and each interview lasted from 45 minutes to 2 hours. Some were conducted in cafés, whilst the rest were carried out in seating areas in the Trafford Centre. As with the first set of interview data collection, before I started to ask questions, I verbally gave my reassurance that their personal data was in "safe hands" and that only I would have access to the transcripts. I explained the purpose of the interview was purely for my research, our conversation would be recorded for my future reference, and I also informed them that all the information they gave would be confidential and anonymous. It was essential that these ethical issues were addressed at the beginning of the interview (Thompson, 1989).

The questions that I asked during the interviews were aimed at getting the Nespresso employees to bring out detailed descriptive experiences regarding the conversational interactions between in-store customers and staff. Therefore, my interview questions were built around “what”, “how”, and “can you please tell me something about ...”. Meanwhile, when designing the questions, I was trying to avoid the “why” questions, because these could distract the respondent focus from describing their lived experiences to more assumed and abstract discussions (Thompson, 1989). For the details of main questions in the second set of interviewing please refer to Appendix II.

During the interviews with the informants, I was trying to engage them in conversations rather than simply answering my questions. That is, I would go back and forth around one question in order to bring out detailed information and thus build a holistic picture about a specific service experience, in-store story, and dialogues that happened at their work place. At the end of the interview, each informant was given a £5 gift of chocolates as a way of thanking them for giving up their time.

3.5.3 Participant Observations

Before the conducting of the interviews, I made some observations at different types of stores in London and Manchester, as well as at the Nespresso store inside of the Trafford Centre. In terms of the selection of stores to observe, I chose department stores (e.g. Selfridges & Co, John Lewis, Debenhams, etc), and other fashion and non-fashion retail stores (e.g. Kurt Geiger, Topshop, All Saints, Reiss, the Apple

Store, Phones4U, Currys, M&S, etc). These observations lasted for 3 weeks, and each day I would spend between 3 and 5 hours in total watching consumers' interactive behaviours with sales representatives, paying particular attention to what people did, what they said, what happened, how it happened, why it happened and so forth. Even though the data collection was purposive as I was aiming to explore the consumer-to-employee interactions and their conversations, I still kept an open mind and took notes whenever I saw or heard something interesting or new.

Apart from conducting observations in various shops, I also watched people's behaviours at the Nespresso store inside of the Manchester Trafford Centre. As discussed earlier, the findings from the first set of interviews had oriented me to focusing on investigating the consumer-to-employee related interactions, in particular, the role of the interactive conversations in the construction of service experiences. As a result, I focus on the service-oriented retail stores to conduct my observations.

The Nespresso boutique store in the Trafford Centre is rectangle-shaped, with a payment area having two tills on the left hand side of the store, where customers queue up to make payments and/or register their customer accounts. On the right hand side of the shop, there is the product display area, showing coffee machines, coffee sleeves, and there are other accessories on the shelves. Since it is an open area, in-store consumers are welcome to touch and interact with the products and other displays. At the back of the store, the company has built up a round shaped coffee bar, where customers can taste different blends of coffee and the employees demonstrate

and explain how to use the machines, educate customers about the coffee as well as conducting personal conversations. Moreover, there is a sitting area called the club room that is at the back of the store and next to the coffee bar. In this area, luxury sofa chairs and computers are provided in order to register the customers as club members and to provide customer services.

Given the fact that I already knew the assistant manager, the Nespresso store in Manchester Trafford Centre seemed a good place to approach to seek permission for the observations. Subsequently, I was granted access and allowed to observe for as long I wished at any time of the day. Meanwhile, thanks for the open layout of the store, it was ideal for collecting rich information through the observations of conversations for addressing the research questions: What are the detail elements of the consumer's operant resources that individuals can deploy through the consumer-to-employee interaction? And what is the process of the retail experience co-creation through the consumer-to-employee interaction? That is, because of the open plan design of the store and especially the establishment of the coffee bar, I was able to get "closer" to the in-store customers and staff in terms of physical distance than in other possible venues. Moreover, by spending hours in the store observing everyday events, I was able to build a rapport with the employees, which led to the breaking down of any reluctance they may have had to being interviewed.

While I was conducting the observations in the stores, I also took fieldnotes, which are considered to be essential for researchers. Regarding this, Bryman (2008) stresses

“because of the frailties of human memory, ethnographers have to take notes based on their observations. There should be fairly detailed summaries of events and behaviours and the researcher’s initial reflections on them” (p. 417). These notes were important for me to be able to recall accurately the observed behaviours, events, and people’s conversations, and also guided me in designing my interview questions. Following Bryman’s (2008) key techniques in making fieldnotes, I would write very quickly and briefly on seeing, hearing, or finding something of interest related to in-store interactions. In addition, I often used my iPhone to record notes since it was faster and more accurate than writing.

Moreover, I took pains not to draw the attention of shoppers so they would not realise they were being “watched” and hence would behave naturally. Bryman (2008) also points out that the organising and writing up detailed fieldnotes at the end of the day is essential for observers. However, my strategy was to write down full information just after the end of the observed event. The reason why I did it was due to fact that my observation involved a lot of conversations and if I did not organise the notes as soon as I could, I would have forgotten specific details containing important information. These notes specified dates, shops’ names, gender, age range (assumed), what they were buying, what consumers did, and what the customers and the sales personnel talked about, body language, body posture, the language they used, and so forth.

3.6 Data Analysis

The two sets of interviews, 28 in total, were audio recorded and transcribed. Some researchers, such as Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that not only does transcription facilitate the researcher to familiarise himself/herself with the interview content, but it also serves as an initial stage regarding interpreting the data. Strauss and Corbin (1998), drawing on the grounded theory perspective, propose three types of coding practice: open, axial and selective coding, which I adopted for this research. Open coding refers to “*the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data* (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p.101), whereas axial coding is “*the process of relating categories to their subcategories, termed ‘axial’ because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions*” (p. 123) and selective coding relates to “*the process of integrating and refining the theory*” (p. 143).

At the initial stage of data analysis, I probed the material line-by-line, paying attention to every single detail and breaking down the transcript into fragmented parts, whilst constantly comparing them to elicit what similarities, differences, or relations there were (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). At the end of coding each interview transcript, I would make memos to myself in note form about what I had found interesting, important or maybe something that needed to be looked at in the other transcripts. These memos were important, because they helped me to speed up the analysis process, which was necessary given the huge amount of information involved.

After opening up the transcriptions, I started to categorise and subcategorise them, and put them into themes. Since the interview questions were asked around “the customer’s positive and negative retail experience”, the categories I identified included: physical store settings, characteristics of the sales personnel, nature and content of conversations with the sales personnel, the ideal retail experience, behavioural outcome (positive and negative) and attitudinal outcome (positive and negative). At this stage, as mentioned above, I was also making memos as well as drawing some maps to help me to understand what the relations, connections, and differences between these themes and sub-themes. In addition, I regularly referred back to the literature review and the research questions in order to seek out any links between the theory and the data outcomes as well as so as to be able to figure out what’s going on here. After constantly comparing themes, asking questions and re-categorising the personal conversations between the consumers and in-store employees associated outcomes started to come to the surface. These findings were also guided by the literature review and relevant theories, which I constantly referred as part of this iterative process. Furthermore, as one of my research questions had the objective of gaining insights into the consumer-to-employee interaction process, I adopted Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) techniques to analyse “process”. That is, I broke down the elicited process into sub-processes, involving each person’s “*tactics, strategies, and routine actions that make up the larger act*” (p. 169). In addition, I employed the same analytic techniques as these authors recommend by asking questions and making comparisons between the different themes and sub-themes (ibid).

3.7 Research Quality

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that it is necessary to establish terms and criteria to examine the quality of the research and trustworthiness could be used as one of the key ones for assessing qualitative research. Meanwhile, Lindgreen and Beverland (2009) compare the differences between the positivist and interpretivist approaches in improving the research quality. These authors propose that the interpretivist researchers commonly adopt four criteria in terms of measuring the research quality, which include confirmability, credibility, transferability, and dependability.

Confirmability – Lindgreen and Beverland (2009) define confirmability as “*the extent to which interpretations are the result of the informants and the phenomenon as opposed to researcher bias*” (p.11). This criterion is addressed through, first, the three main findings that were discovered through this thesis being shared and discussed by three researchers: this researcher and two supervisors. Notably, these three people come from different cultural backgrounds. Second, the findings were discussed over the phone with random selected informants from the second set of interviewing in order to check if there were any disagreements. Third, the ideas and findings were presented and explained to four non-participants and PhD colleagues.

Credibility – the second aspects of research quality is credibility, which refers to “*the extent to which the results appear to be acceptable representations of the data*” (Lindgreen and Beverland 2009, p.11). One of the techniques used to enhance this

criterion is triangulation, which refers to using more than one source of data, in this case informants, when studying the social phenomena (Bryman, 2008; Denzin, 1970; Lindgreen and Beverland, 2009). In this research, the two sets of interview data that were collected from both the consumer and employee perspectives allowed for triangulation, and thus increased the credibility of the data. In addition, two supervisors gave feedback on the data interpretation

Transferability – This is defined by Beverland et al. (2010) as “*the extent to which findings from one study in one context will apply to other contexts*” (p. 11). This was operationalized through, first, each informant from both interview sets discussing his or her retail experiences across a range of contexts. Second, the findings were shown to people who are working/used to work in retailing as well as service organisations.

Dependability – The fourth criterion is “*the extent to which the findings are unique to time and place; the stability or consistency of the explanations*” (Beverland et al., 2010). This was addressed through, first, all informants sharing their past experiences as well as present day ones. Second, the first and second sets of interviews were conducted in different years and the findings emerged as being consistent and stable across all the respondents’ consumption stories.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

This chapter contains three parts. The first part of the findings (4.1 – 4.6) addresses the first and second research question. That is, 1) Through what way(s) do consumers co-create their retail experiences with the sales personnel in the retail stores? 2) What are the detail elements of the consumer's operant resources that individuals deploy during consumer-to-sales person interaction? The second part of the findings chapter (4.7 – 4.10) pertains to research question number three. That is, What are the outcomes that are caused by the consumer-to-sales person interaction? The third part of this chapter (4.11 – 4.14) addresses to the fourth research question. That is, What is the process of the retail experience co-creation during consumer-to-sales person interaction?

Findings Part 1

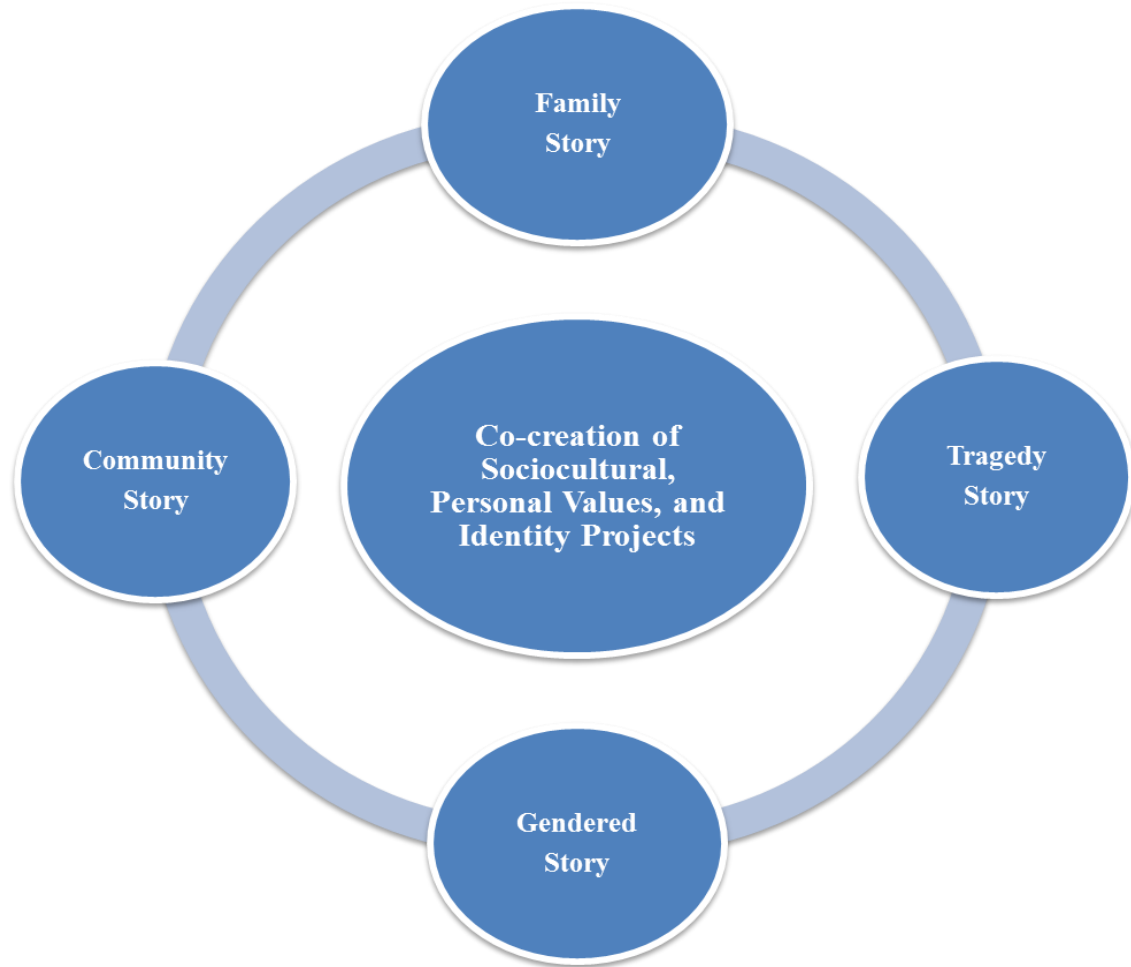
Four Themes of the Life Story and the Associated Social and Cultural Resources of the Consumer

4.1 Introduction

According to the interviews and observations, when an individual visits a retail store, he or she selects a certain type of personal life story to exchange with the sales person in order to portray his/her values and beliefs, express identity and also seek to embrace meaning during the shopping experience. Personal narratives are considered as self-portraits (McAdams, 2008), whereby consumers leverage human interaction (i.e. consumer-to-employee interaction) as a medium to tell various stories, and thus to sustain their identities as well as to reveal self-beliefs, values, and normative practices that are constructed within a social and cultural context.

The data suggest that there are four types of life narratives that consumers deploy with the sales personnel, which are the family story, tragedy story, gendered story, and community story (Figure 6). These four themes of the personal story are embedded with rich sociocultural and personal aspects of operant resources and also reflect different perspectives of the identity of the consumer.

Figure 6 Four Types of Personal Life Story



4.2 The Family Story – Family Values and Kinship

The discovery of the swapping of the family story has led to a resource-oriented view in addressing how family-related narratives could socially and culturally shape the consumer's retail experience. According to the definition, a family refers to a group of people to "*whom a person recognises himself/herself as being related either by blood or marriage*" (Young and Willmott 1986, p. 201), in which case, a person's role and identity in this social group could be a father/mother, husband/wife, son/daughter,

brother/sister and so forth. Marketing scholars, such as Kotler and Keller (2006), stress that the family is considered as one of the essential reference groups that influences consumers' purchasing behaviours even though the individual may not interact often with his/her family peers. Similarly, consumer culture theorists interpret the process of how individuals' consumption behaviours are constructed by their family members (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Moore et al., 2002; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991; Ward and Reingen, 1990).

It has emerged from the investigation that when the consumers interact with sales personnel in a retail store, they are willing to share their family values as well as to expose their identities played in the family (e.g. a mother, a father, a child, or a partner) through storytelling. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, both the consumer and employee perspectives were sought during the interview process. The storytelling and swapping about one's family was not only discovered from interviewing the consumers, but also found after analysing the interviews with sales personnel. Examples one to three below illustrate the co-creation of family values from the consumer's perspective, and the fourth example represents an employee's point of view.

Example 1

The exchange of information about parents and children's loving kinship was commonly conducted between the consumer and the sales person within the family story category. Charlotte was a younger customer, aged 28 and she went to the bridal

shop to purchase a dress for her wedding. This shopping trip was embedded with rich meaning of family orientation, family relationships, and mother-daughter bonding values.

Charlotte – I went to a bridal shop to buy a wedding dress. I picked this lady, she's an elderly lady ... She made me feel so special, I felt like she was my mum helping me to get ready for the day. We chatted a lot. I told her I'm from Singapore, my family is in Singapore, we are very close, they always call me, email me, and send me pictures. I told her my mum was planning to come here to help me choose my wedding dress, but she's very busy with work. So she couldn't make it. What a shame. They've promised me they will definitely come to my wedding. She said "you remind me of my daughter, she's about your age, she's just got married last year and moved to another city". And then she started to tell me everything about her daughter, like what she does for a living, what her wedding dress looked like, what the wedding ceremony was like and etc etc. That was very interesting.

The wedding dress is one of the most important decisions of the wedding ritual for a woman (Otnes and Pleck, 2003), especially in Asian culture and picking a dress as well as attending the event contain rich cultural meaning. A mother should always help the daughter in choosing the dress and grooming the bride in order to express the sense of mother and daughter closeness and female kinship. These family values and wedding rituals seemed to be important to the Asian customer Charlotte since she chose a particular retail assistant to serve her in instead of being served by a random person, for she emphasised that "*I picked this lady, she's an elderly lady*".

The age of the sales lady portrayed a "mum image" to Charlotte and consequently evoked her family values and the desire for a mother-to-daughter bonding time

through wedding dress shopping. The behaviour that she picked an elderly lady to serve her suggests she did not want to have an ordinary shopping experience, but rather one where the “mother helps the daughter to get groomed and become a beautiful bride” during the service.

After Charlotte told the sales lady a piece of narrative about her mother, as a sales person, she could relate with and connect to her customer since she was a mother and shared her emotions about when her daughter got married and moved away. The story of her daughter that she disclosed to Charlotte provided a good match with her customer’s story since it was embedded with female kinship and family values as well as wedding rituals. That is, the exchange of the family story facilitated value-in-use, and as a result, Charlotte left the store happy and highlighted that “*I felt like she was my mum helping me to get ready for the day*” to describe her feelings about the meaningful service experience.

Examples 2 – 4

Apart from customer Charlotte’s example, three more examples could be attributed to the category of the family story. A summary of the interview passages regarding these is provided in table 3.

Table 3 Informant Passages of the Family Story

Type of the life story	The family story
Definition	The personal life story regarding the individual's relatives or kinship members.
Informant Passages	<p>Example 2</p> <p>Sophie - I went to a jewellery store last week. I have been in there several times and the same lady served me ... I told her "I'm looking for a birthday present for my daughter, something special, you know, she's turning 18 next week, this is the first time she's leaving home, she's a university student now, I am so proud of her, but I really miss her". She said "oh you must have a wonderful daughter! I have three children, they've all grown up and they have their own careers, families, and children. They are very very busy, I hardly see them. I miss them as well, especially my grandchildren.</p> <p>Example 3</p> <p>Emma – I went to this shop to get my wedding dress altered. This lady has served me before but I couldn't remember her name. She noticed my engagement ring. She said to me "oh your ring is beautiful, look at the size of the diamond, it must have cost a fortune". I told her "yea, my fiancé had been saving up for years, and he had worked really really hard, like more than 70 hours a week. I told him don't worry too much about it, but he told me I deserve a nice ring". She went "aww, that's very nice of him" ... so yea, we had a really nice chat. I told her what my fiancé does, how we met each other, da da da. She told me something about her husband as well, she mentioned her husband is in the army, she barely sees him and she always gets upset about it, so he bought her a very nice necklace on their wedding anniversary to cheer her up.</p>

	<p>Example 4</p> <p>Linda – This woman who comes in always tells me something about her daughter. I’ve got a daughter, she’s same year old as hers. So she would say “how is she, how is she getting on? How’s her school and stuff like that”</p>
--	--

Table 3 reveals that the passages from interviewing customer Sophie (example 2) and the sales assistant in the Nespresso store, Linda (example 4), shared similarities with the first example. That is, family-related values and meanings could be added to the consumer’s service experience through the narration of an individual’s mother and/or daughter. However, the difference between the first two passages and the last example is that Linda’s quote was chosen from interviewing the employees, which could thus reveal the consumer’s behaviour from a sales person’s perspective, whereas, Charlotte and Sophie’s examples represented the consumer-to-sales people interaction from the customer angle.

Linda was a part time sales consultant working at the Nespresso store in Manchester. She had a five-year-old daughter and she mentioned in her interview that, in general, the most common conversation topic between her and her customers was their children. It can be seen here that Linda’s customer was a female who was also a mother and the fact that both had children who were of the same age formed a connection between the sales person and the consumer. Linda reported that “*this woman who comes in always tells me something about her daughter*”, which indicates that the customer sought to share and narrate her family values and loving relationship

as well as to evoke their identity of being mothers through consumption. Consequently, the vocal interactions added unique meanings to the lady's shopping trips, since Linda, as a sales person, could contribute similar types of resources to co-create family orientation, kinship, and the loving aspects of values.

Moreover, the family values, beliefs, and loving kinship could also be created through narrating one's partner. However, instead of producing parent-child loving values, such as Charlotte, Sophie, and Linda provided examples, the conversations about partners were more focused on the expression of husband-wife loving relationships as well as bonding, commitment, and intimacy. Example 3 in table 3 shows that the consumer Emma claimed that her pleasant shopping experience was built based on telling stories about her engagement and marriage. That is, her engagement ring story was fulfilled with intimate, commitment, and loving aspects of beliefs and values. As the story listener, the sales lady could relate to Emma, and consequently exchanged her narratives about her husband and her wedding anniversary to indicate her understanding about marriage, romance, loving relationships, and the family.

Summary of the Family Story

In sum, the findings suggest that the personal story with the provision of information about an individual's relatives or kinship members is one of the most common life narratives that consumers and sales people like to tell in the retail store. This type of personal life story has been termed the family story. These family-related narratives

not only give audiences detailed information about family members and life events, but also facilitate value-in-use and thus embed family values, morality, and a loving kinship ideology into the consumers' service experiences. The contributions that were provided by the informants indicate that the family story contains three characteristics: 1) a person's family narrative always reflects positive sides of personal experience and life events; 2) the centre of the conversation addresses the features of the person (i.e. the family member) and the loving relations they have built with them. That is, the customer and the employee give rich information on what the family members are like, what they do, and what has happened to them and 3) during the story swapping process, the evoked identity of the individual is likely to be a member with a kinship relationship (i.e. the parent, the child, or the partner) rather than themselves as a customer.

4.3 The Tragedy Story – Grief, Morality, and Values of Life

The tragedy story is the second type of life narrative that a customer might relate to the sales person in the store. According to the definition, a tragedy is “*an event causing great suffering, destruction, and distress, such as serious accident, crime, or natural catastrophe*” (Oxford University Press, 2013). In this research, the tragedy story refers to a traumatic event that has happened or/is happening to an individual himself/herself or family members.

The tragedy story was found in the second set of data collection, which was during the interviewing of the Nespresso employees. The findings reveal that during the service period, the consumer was always the one who initiated a conversation about a tragic event, and also was willing to give much detailed information about it. Under the circumstances in which a tragedy story was told, the customer characterised him/herself as a victim during the shopping trip, whose shopping experience was re-created or co-created based on grief, morality, and realisation of life values. The following four examples serve to illustrate how the consumers' personalised service experiences are co-constructed through the exchange of the tragedy story.

Example 1

According to Tom's interview below, when he was serving a male customer for the first time in the store, he shared that his wife had passed away last year and Nespresso had helped him a lot since he had consumed considerable amount of coffee to keep him awake in order to reduce the amount of focus on the daunting event. This vocal behaviour shows that the gentleman wanted to express his feelings about what a miserable situation he had to deal with because of the death of his wife. In addition, it also suggests that he was using the service encounter as a channel to grieve and memorialise his wife.

Tom – A gentleman came in, he wanted to buy another coffee machine. We sat down to register his machine for warranty, and he said to me “oh my wife died last year, Nespresso makes me so happy, I love coffee, I don’t like to sleep too much because when I lie down, I think about her”. It’s an awful thing. So I said to him, “that’s terrible, I am so sorry”. He said “well, she died of lung cancer, we went to the hospital, the hospital told her that she had some shadows on her lung”. And then he said “the doctor told her she had 6 months to live”. And then he went to a lot of detail about the funeral, what happened at the funeral and what they put inside the coffin; they put flowers, letters, and pictures of the family. And he even told the undertaker to put a vent on the coffin so that she could breathe. Because he was paranoid that she could not breathe. We sat there for almost 35 minutes, it was very, very sad and it made me feel very sad as well. I just tried to sympathise him, so I said “I am truly sorry for your loss, I can imagine how you feel. I totally understand that. When my grandma passed away years ago, my whole family was very upset and I was devastated because I was very close to my grandma. But I’ve gradually recovered as time goes by”.

From the passage above, it can be seen that Tom gave his customer attention and showed sympathy, which in this case, encouraged the gentleman to further mourn and remember his wife. That is, the customer gave more details about how his wife died, what the funeral was like, and how he and the whole family coped with the loss. It is clear that the customer was living in great pain emotionally and could not accept the fact that his wife had passed away, as he mentioned that “*I told the undertaker to put a vent on the coffin so that she can breathe*”.

As a sales person, Tom could relate to his customer and interpret what the gentleman wanted from the shopping trip. This was because he had suffered from a similar tragic event before and he could recall the memory of negative feelings, demand for sympathy as well as confusion about the meaning of life and life goals. Consequently, he responded by telling his customer about the personal experience of

his grandma's death in order to show social connection and moral support. Notably, he stressed that "*I've gradually recovered as time goes by*", which indicates his acceptance of the death and that his life had to move forward. As a result of this dialogue, the value-in-use through the vocal interaction brought special meaning to the gentleman's shopping trip, that is, the consumption was associated with the healing of pain and re-discovering of the purpose of life.

Examples 2 – 4

In conjunction with example 1, examples 2 to 4 are presented in table 4 in order to summarise the various conversation contents that contributed to the category of the tragedy story. It is illustrated in table 4 below that when the consumers started to open up with the sales personnel, some of them not only discussed with the sales personnel about a fatal illness that had happened to themselves or their relatives, but also narrated a traumatising historical life event.

Table 4 Informant Passages of the Tragedy Story

Type of the life story	The tragedy story
Definition	The personal life story regarding the individual's loss of a family member, a fatal disease, and/or a daunting historical life event.
Informant Passages	<p>Example 2</p> <p>Kim – I had a customer, who told me she had cancer, which was a shock. She told me that she had terminal cancer, and she was clearly having a bad day. I felt so sorry for her and I said to her “I am so sorry about that” and I also explained to her that “my auntie has got very similar to yours, I know it’s difficult, I can imagine how you feel”. I discussed that with her because I could relate to her. It is something I could relate to, I would give her some of my own personal, mmm, sort of feedback. And I just showed a bit of sympathy and empathy for her really. She talked to me about her family, and how they were coping with it. She talked about the treatments, and what it did to her body and things like that. What she’d found comfortable, and what things she’d found not so comfortable. I was a bit like therapist. And she had a bit of a cry, I gave her a hug and I made a joke. She went out happy. Yea, because I could relate to her, and talk to her, so it made both of us happy.</p> <p>Example 3</p> <p>Jade – This lady was looking for a dress for her daughter, and she started to talk to me, like how long the alteration would take for the dress, and I said it’s about two weeks, but she said, well ... but the wedding will be in two weeks. She was like oh the reason why she needed it in a rush because her daughter has cancer. And I said, oh my god, that’s awful, and then she was telling me all about it, like how she went for treatment, had had an operation and in the end they found out she didn’t have much time left, so they had to rush into the wedding. She was telling me about hospital visits and</p>

	<p>stuff. You could see she was getting very upset about it. She also told me the wedding was originally planned for next year, but they didn't know if she would survive for long enough. I just tried to be sympathetic and I was trying to help her out. I told her that I had a relative who was diagnosed with cancer 5 years ago, he went through horrible treatments and surgery, and the doctor said he could only live up to 2 years, but he was staying positive all the time; he still kept going to the gym, jogging, and doing what he normally does. Also, his family had given him great support. And he had survived.</p> <p>Example 4</p> <p>Linda – I served a lady and her young daughter. We got into a conversation. I said “are you doing anything exciting?” She said “oh yea, we just came back from a school trip, we went to a concentration camp”. And I said “oh are you Jewish”? The mother said “oh yea, we are Jewish”. And then she started to talk about how Jewish people were suffering during the war and its part of their history that they could not forget. I almost felt I had a connection with them, because of my granddad's experience. I wanted them to know that he was in the concentration camp and helped around. I wanted to tell her that. So I said “my grandfather was part of the liberation of one of the big concentration camps. He was in fighting in Germany and they (the Armies) came cross and they liberated it”. She was very interested, because obviously I knew part of the story. Being Jewish, they knew the terrible story of what happened to their people. I told them about how my granddad got to the camp and found out these people were starving and all these bodies and stuff. He helped getting food for everybody, helped everyone.</p>
--	---

Tom's passage (example 1) revealed the narration of one's family loss was one of the conversation topics of the tragedy story. In contrast, the examples from Nespresso employees Kim, Jade, and Linda indicate that the customers and sales people in the store may want to discuss the suffering brought on by a fatal disease or a daunting historical event. For example, sales personnel Kim and Jade had discussed the

devastating events surrounding cancer with their customers, whereas Nespresso staff member Linda talked through the Holocaust with her Jewish clients in the shop.

It is understood from examples 2 and 3, when Kim and Jade's customers interacted with them, they were willing to give much information to the sales ladies on how much the diagnosis of cancer had had an impact on their lives. More specifically, Kim's customer revealed that she had got terminal cancer, and Jade's client told a sad story about her daughter who had been coping with cancer. Both the consumers in these two examples went through extensive detailed and private information about the treatments, operations, and how the traumatic event had affected the patients as well as their families. These behaviours suggest that the consumers aim was to search for sympathy and try to find meaning regarding the suffering. As McAdams (2008) has pointed out, often, *"people cannot or do not want to discount negative life events. Instead, they try to make meaning out of the suffering they are currently experiencing, or experienced once upon a time"*. (p. 254). In addition, the vocal information given and the negative aspect of the emotions deployed suggest that Kim and Jade's customers preferred to reveal their identity as victims, who hoped to make meanings out of their daunting life experiences through consumption.

In comparison with the loss of the family member (example 1), and the suffering caused by fatal illness (examples 2 and 3), Linda's story (example 4) exposed a different aspect of the tragedy story. When the sales representative Linda served 2 Jewish customers, they brought up a cultural and historical aspect of personal

narrative to discuss, which was the tragedy that happened to Jewish people during World War II.

It can be understood from the passage that being Jewish, the customer intentionally brought up the topic about her trip to the concentration camp, and also paid attention to talking through what had happened to their people, and how much they were suffering even though almost everybody knew about this period of daunting history. This vocal action suggested that the lady aimed to utilise customer service as a means to grieve about the tragic event as well as to spread cultural knowledge and history about the Holocaust. As the story listener, Linda could immediately connect with her customer because she shared the collective identity, which was being Jewish or at least partially so. Moreover, she was able to share the story of her grandfather helping to liberate the concentration camp, in order to show bonding through empathy and thus forge a collective identity.

Summary of the Tragedy Story

It has emerged from the interviewing of the Nespresso employees that the consumers and the sales consultants would narrate to each other about personal experiences regarding the loss of a family member (such as Tom's story), a fatal disease (i.e. Jade and Kim's stories) or a traumatic life experience (i.e. Linda's story) that had happened to the individual or his/her family members. This verbal behaviour suggests that some customers considered the service as a medium for grieving and memorialising a tragic event at a social and moral level, interpreting the meaning from the suffering, and gaining moral support and sympathy.

There are several distinctions between the tragedy story and the family story, even though some of the former refer to family members. First of all, the two types of story portray opposite sides of reality and events. That is, the former is focused on the negative side of a person's life experience, whereas the latter reflects the positive side of the personal event. Second, the purpose and priority are different when a customer tells a tragedy story when compared to a family one. That is, the focus of a tragedy story is on the subject that is the tragic event itself, whereas during family narratives the customers prioritise describing the people rather than the event itself. Third, with the tragedy story, people reveal their identities as victims, whereas individuals evoke their identities as family members in the family story.

4.4 The Gendered Story – Gender Roles and Gender Stereotypes

The third type of the life narrative that is involved in the consumer-to-employee conversation in the retail store is called the gendered story. This type of story refers to the gender attributes assigned to males and females, which evoke gender stereotype roles and related values and identities. It was found that this type of story can occur when the consumer conducts interactive conversations with a same gendered sales person. There are three types of narratives regarding the gendered story, with the femininity story and feminist story being generated under the condition of female-to-female interaction, whereas the masculinity story is commonly swapped by male consumers and sales men.

The contemporary female image and identity is portrayed through femininity and feminist stories, in which the former aims to express the feminine aspect of female identity, grooming values, and the myth of “beauty”, and the latter evokes feminist values, power equality in the society, independence, and an ideology of challenging and reversing the subordinate position of women. In terms of male-to-male interactions, values and service experience is co-created through building conversations around male stereotyping of personal interests and hobbies, such as, football, record collections, and cars.

4.4.1 The Femininity Story – Feminine Aspect of the Female Gender Role

The femininity story is a type of story that is commonly shared and exchanged between female customers and female employees in a retail store. In particular, the swapping of gender-oriented personal narratives commonly occurs in fashion-related retail environments, such as clothes, shoes, and cosmetics outlets. The conversations between consumers and sales women regarding this form of narrative cover the feminine cultures of consumerism, the female body and image, and as pointed out above, the ideology of “beauty”. That is, this type of dialogue contains rich cultural meaning of feminine values, grooming rituals, and modern female identity. Additionally, the swapping of the femininity story can reveal the desired identity and image of female individuals, for as Antonides and Van Raaij (1998) propose, fashion products, such as clothes and cosmetics, are expressive ways of creating a person’s desired identity.

Example 1

The consumer-to-employee conversations that are built around clothing and body images are found to be commonly practised by females to co-construct their feminine identity. When female customers go shopping for clothes, they tend to be aware of their body image, such as pretty/ugly, feminine, and/or attractive, ordinary. Antonides and Van Raaij (1998) stress that “*the body is an important part of the identity*” (p.163). In this current study, it was found that the female customers tended to use shopping, particularly their interaction with the staff, to express their feminine and grooming values as well as their desired image and identity. Customer Rachel’s story is an example of this.

Rachel – I went to M&S to buy them (clothes), because they had a girl there who was absolutely fantastic. I was going to buy some clothes and I remember I actually told her, I am not a visual person, I am an auditory person, I don’t put clothing well, together well, I’ve spent so much money on clothes that never look good on me. I find it’s so frustrating and depressing. Can you teach me how to do it? She said to me “don’t worry, you are not the only one, I found it was hard for me too”. She told me one of her friends was a stylist, who had taught her a lot of techniques on how to match clothes and look good. She explained to me how she would pick out certain clothes, match different colours and style them.

The passage above indicates that the customer Rachel developed personal conversations with the sales person when she went shopping for clothes. Instead of simply purchasing the clothes, she decided to tell a piece of personal information about herself. Rachel showed her desire to achieve the ideal appearance as a female, but as she told the sales person, she did not “*put clothes together well*” and she had spent a lot of money on clothes, but they never looked good on her. She also used

“frustrating” and *“depressing”* to indicate her level of negative emotions towards the situation, and expressed how much this female fashion image, and the feminine ideal of good-looking meant to her. As the sales person, and also as a woman, the employee was able to interpret the meaning of the story that Rachel told since she shared similar feminine values and desires. So she told Rachel of her experiences, and in particular, she passed on her cultural and aesthetic knowledge by delivering a personalised service with the central message of “becoming beautiful”.

Examples 2 – 3

The first example suggests that the femininity-related image and identity can be co-constructed by the narration of one’s consumption experience in relation to clothing. In conjunction with this finding, the second and third examples are also provided, and they are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5 Informant Passages of the Femininity Story

Type of the life story	The gendered story – the femininity story
Definition	The personal life story regarding clothes, shoes, cosmetics, and other female-oriented consumption. This type of story is commonly shared between female customers and female employees.
Informant Passages	<p>Example 2</p> <p>Laura – I said to the girl working in the shoe shop “I’ve been here three times this week, I’ve already spent more than £100, I shouldn’t be buying these (shoes)”. She said “oh yea, I keep saying that to myself every month, but I still keep buying them”.</p>

	<p>Example 3</p> <p>A female customer, who looked around 20-25, came to the MAC counter and a female makeup artist served her, who was in her early 20s, with immaculate makeup. The customer started to have a conversation with the makeup artist. She said “I love your makeup, I love your smoky eyes! I am very rubbish at doing makeup. I’ve tried to learn from fashion magazines, but every time I attempt it, I always end up looking like I’ve been fighting with someone” [laugh]. Do you mind showing me how to do it? The sales assistant sat the customer down, with smile and looked very friendly. She brought out several eyes shadows, an eyeliner pencil, mascara, and some make up brushes. She told the customer these are the items that she’d been using at home. She also pointed at a brown eye shadow and two brushes and said “you don’t have to buy all the products I’ve shown you, but these three items I have found very useful and they were my first investment when I started to learn how to do make up”. While she was doing the makeover, she gave the lady some of her personal feedback and opinions on foundations, lipsticks, skincare, and so forth (Fieldnote, MAC counter at Selfridges, Manchester Trafford Centre, 05/12/2012).</p>
--	--

It has been interpreted from the first example that the narration of clothing and appearance between the females contained rich information and meaning about female grooming rituals. Examples 2 and 3, as illustrated in Table 5, also provide support for this finding. However, these two examples indicate that femininity values are communicated and co-created through the discussion of shoes and cosmetics rather than picking clothes. As mentioned by Arthurs (2003), the consumption of shoes, clothes, and handbags plays an essential role in constructing the (post)modern female image and identity as well as the celebration of independence for many women.

In example 2, Laura's conversation reflects a narrative that she possibly owned too many pairs of shoes, but she had the desire of purchasing more since their consumption would allow her to achieve her feminine-related identity and ideology. The female staff member could relate to Laura's situation and thus deployed a short story of her own by saying "*oh yea, I keep saying that to myself every month, but I still keep buying them*". This piece of information gave hints to Laura that she shared similar feminine values, and believed that shoes were an important component in female grooming rituals and the construction of a feminine image. Consequently, the vocal interaction co-created a sense of female culture of consumerism, which thus brought the notion of femininity to Laura's shopping experience. Similarly, the fieldnote that was made at the MAC counter in Selfridges (example 3) suggests that during the service period, the customer and the sales person deployed personal experience and life stories to illustrate the point that the expression of the glamour aspect of the female image as well as grooming and maintaining a beautiful appearance were essential in constructing the modern female identity and image.

In sum, the storytelling and swapping about shoes, clothes, and appearance between the female consumers and staff can provide a platform for sharing and co-creating feminine cultures. Moreover, the conversations that are conducted in the store can transform the seller-to-buyer relationship to the level of woman-to-woman bonding through having "girl talk" and "girl time" involving getting dressed up, putting make up on, and/or having a chit chat. For example, the lady who visited the MAC counter felt comfortable telling a joke about herself and having a laugh with the sales person, such as when she pointed out that "*every time I attempt it (smoky eye), I always end up looking like I've been fighting with someone*". In addition, customer Rachel

acknowledged the sales lady on a first name basis, thus revealing the personal level of the relationship building.

4.4.2 The Feminist Story – Heroism and Power Perspective of the Female Gender Role

Apart from expressing the femininity aspect of the female identity by exchanging personal stories about fashion, grooming, and gendered image, female customers and sales women may also portray heroism and the power perspective of their gender role and identity through swapping feminist stories. A feminist story is a type of personal narrative that female customers deploy in order to portray their feminist values, power equality in society and independence, which is underpinned by an ideology of challenging and reversing the subordinate position of women. A summary of the feminist story examples is provided in Table 6.

Examples 1 – 2

Table 6 Informant Passages of the Feminist Story

Type of the life story	The gendered story – the feminist story
Definition	The personal life story regarding heroism and the power perspective of the female gender role and identity. This type of story is commonly shared between female customers and female employees.

<p>Informant Passages</p>	<p>Example 1</p> <p>Natalie - I went to Auto Village. Yes, I went in ... it was a young lady (sales assistant) who came up to me... she picked up within 30 seconds that I loved cars and gave me all that personal “love our car” experience. So somebody who worked really hard, but when I just wanted to chat about other things, she took the time to talk to me. I told her I like shopping for cars, I like the whole involvement, looking at cars, choosing cars, getting to know the dealership and everything about them, having that total ownership, but, I don’t like dealing with car salesmen and male mechanics. I absolutely hate that. I detest being treated badly and I hate them making up stories about what’s wrong with my car in order to justify why they have charged me so much. She went “oh yes, they think because we are women, we don’t know what we are talking about. I used to get ripped off before I knew anything about cars, but not anymore...no way”.</p> <p>Example 2</p> <p>Vanessa – I always go to this hardware store. There is a lady who owns it, Simone, knows everything and she’s very service-oriented. We chat quite a lot ... I remember we had this conversation, she told me she used to work in a hardware store, her boss and other guys who worked in the shop never took her seriously and they never respected the female customers. It was a very sexist environment, so she decided to quit her job and open her own hardware store. She also told me it was very hard for a single woman to set up a business. I said to her “wow...what you’ve done is amazing! I totally understand what you mean. I still remember there was a guy in Harvey Norman (auto shop) tried to intimidate me by asking me where my husband was, but it didn’t bother me at all, because I used to work in the oil industry, I could handle the situation”.</p>
----------------------------------	--

It can be understood from Table 6, that the passages from Natalie (example 1) and Vanessa (example 2) shared common characteristics. That is, these two female individuals communicated their feminist values and the ideology of gender equality through the linguistic process of story swapping. In this case, the personal narrative sharing aspect of vocal interaction led to the consumers' side of values and beliefs being recognised and integrated, which consequently brought unique and personal meanings to the shopping experience.

When Natalie was browsing in the auto store, she revealed to the sales lady that she “*loved*” cars and that she liked the whole “*involvement*” and “*ownership*” of them. This information shows that Natalie had a passion for cars, and she aimed to express her belief that having an interest in cars should not be stereotyped as a masculine behaviour in the 21st century. She used the word “*ownership*” to reveal her willingness to take control, and be independent, which further suggests the feminist aspect of her consumption behaviour. In addition, Natalie told the sales person about her previous personal experience of being overcharged and fooled by men in a car servicing garage. She used the word “*hate*” twice to describe the extreme level of her negative feeling and attitude towards the unpleasant shopping experience. She also used “*detest*” to reveal how much she hated being treated in a sexist way. This passage contains rich evidence that Natalie was not in favour of inequalities between men and women in society. The vocal reaction of the sales lady gave reassurance and support to Natalie's attitudes and beliefs. Most notably, the female car trader used “*we*” to represent a collective level of understating and thus build a sense of female closeness.

In conjunction with Natalie's example, when the female customer Vanessa visited the hardware store, Simone, the owner of the shop, told her a story about how she set up her business. Her successful career path was a feminist statement against the traditional roles of women of domesticity and child-rearing (Friedan, 1965). The owner's personal narrative activated Vanessa's stock of cultural resources about women being independent. In particular, with her coming from the male dominated "*oil industry*", she would have faced a lot of prejudice that had obviously made her stronger and more determined to succeed as a woman. Given these circumstances, it came naturally for Vanessa to share a story so as to show understanding and agreement that women are becoming more powerful.

In sum, women's roles and social status have changed significantly over the decades. They are becoming more educated, attaining higher levels of jobs, and engaging more in masculine working environments. These changes in their roles and identities in society suggest that women of today are aware of their increasing power, and thus express more resistance to gender discrimination and female role stereotypes (Ford and LaTour, 1996). Regarding this, it emerges from the interviews that when the female customers had interactive conversations with the sales ladies, they deployed personal stories to do with feminism and independence. It has also been elicited that the narration of the feminist story is determined by two conditions, that is, where they shop and who they interact with. First of all, male-oriented stores (e.g. hardware stores, auto dealers, electricity stores and so on) are often associated with "sexism" and inequality, for many female customers have claimed that they have been intimidated or treated badly when they go shopping in such environments (Manahan and Beverland, 2005). Therefore, male-centred shopping environments tend to recall

female consumers' feminism values. For example, Natalie related her story in a car salesroom and Vanessa was telling the sales person her story in a hardware store. Second, the sales personnel as value co-creators in these situations play important roles in providing collective values and ideologies for the customers to exchange and integrate.

4.4.3 The Masculinity Story – Masculinity Aspect of the Male Gender Identity

In comparison with the life stories that are exchanged by women, the content of the male side of personal conversations would appear to be different. The distinctive vocal behaviours between men and women might be due to the fact that gender is biologically determined as well as socially and culturally constructed (Gabriel 2008, Oakley, 1972). Men are likely to build conversations around stereotypes of male interests and activities, such as football record collections, and cars. Four examples are used in this section, with two being from the consumer's side of the interviewing, and the other two being from the sales person's perspective.

Example 1

Sport is nearly always associated with the social construction of masculinity (Whitson, 1990), especially football and the love of football teams is classified as a true "lad thing" (King, 1997). This research has found that talking about football is one of the most common conversation topics that is conducted amongst men. For example, the

Nespresso assistant manager, Liam had a conversation with his customer about it during the service time.

Liam – There's a good customer that comes in, called Chris, I serve him quite a lot, he always asks for me. So he's a big fan of Manchester United, and I am a big fan of Liverpool. But I love football, I obviously play football quite a lot. That me telling him about me playing football, me really enjoying Liverpool built this sort of like banter, he was like "oh Liverpool is rubbish" I was like "oh no, they are not, they are gonna win something this year". "Oh no, they're never gonna win anything". That was something which came out of like him just to start a conversation, "oh we are going to watch this United game this weekend". I said "oh do you watch a lot"? He's like "I've got a seasonal ticket" I was like "oh I would love to have a seasonal ticket. I've applied for a Liverpool seasonal ticket". He's like "oh you are a Liverpool fan, I am not so sure if you can serve me if you are a Liverpool fan". It was like a year ago, and ever since, he's come in once a week, we always talk about football.

As Liam mentioned in the interview, he loved football and he played football as well, while his customer, Chris, also shared the same interests being of male gender. When Liam served his customer, they always talked to each other about watching football matches and playing football. In this case, the conversations developed through shared gender identity and this male-oriented activity had transformed the professional seller-to-buyer relationship into a more social and personal level of friendship. As Liam put it: *"We speak about football, nothing to do with work; I am not selling him a product"*. The swapping of personal stories about loving football further suggests that customer Chris considered Liam as a "mate", rather than a sales consultant who was trying to sell him coffee machines as they were always bantering or teasing each other.

Examples 2 – 4

Apart from the quote selected from interviewing Liam (example 1), another three examples were also added to the category of the masculinity story in order to support the discovery of this type of personal narrative. A summary of the interview passages is illustrated in Table 7 and it reveals the range of conversation topics of this type of narrative.

Table 7 Informant Passages of the Masculinity Story

Type of life story	The gendered story – the masculinity story
Definition	The personal life story regarding the masculinity aspect of the male gender role and identity. This type of story is commonly shared between male customers and male employees.
Informant Passages	<p>Example 2</p> <p>William – I had a chat with this car salesman, we talked about cars in the beginning, but our conversation quickly switched to football, because he picked up that we both like football. We spent almost an hour talking about football, like our supported teams, games, and absolutely everything about football. Yeah, that was good, I enjoy the conversation. Again... it was more getting into a personal and social level rather than just a simple transaction.</p> <p>Example 3</p> <p>Brian – I always go to this record store, I know all the staff very very well, all on very very close first name basis. It's funny, you just tell them about your life. They get you talking and get you comfortable. There's only one girl working in the store, she's quite nice, sometimes I talk to</p>

	<p>her, but so I tend to talk and listen to the guys more. It's more of a male-dominated store...We always talk about our record collections, our favourite bands, favourite albums, rare records that are hard to get hold of, and this sort of stuff. Sometimes, we talk about football, video games, and other things.</p> <p>Example 4</p> <p>George— We both have a passion for quality. That kind of similarity leads to a story on how I love to drive around my dad's Mercedes, because it's such a lovely car. You can hear the clank of the door closing, the quality of the radio, and everything else I used to very love. I am always coupling this with the quality of the (coffee) machine that I have at home, I like the feel of it, when I open it, close it, reminds me of opening and closing of my dad's Mercedes' door. That's how I communicate really...He seemed to relate to this. He said "oh yeah, I love that kind of feeling when you get something nice, when you give a clank on the door, you feel that quality. Because we were talking about cars, he was kind of talking about Mercedes in comparison, he was talking about his Audi that he really loved, and he went there, he tried so many different things, so many cars and dealerships and he found this one fits like a glove, works amazingly well.</p>
--	--

Table 7 indicates that apart from Liam's example, the information that was obtained from customer William's interview (example 2) also supported the perspective that the exchange of sport-related life stories can co-create the masculinity perspective of male-gender identity and the retail experience for the male customer. In particular, William stressed that it was a pleasant shopping trip, and that it had move towards a social and personal level rather than a simple business deal.

Moreover, the co-creation of the masculinity aspect of values and beliefs was not only restricted to the exchange of personal information about playing football, but also involved the discussion of record collections, video games, and cars. Informant Brian (example 3) revealed in his interview that he enjoyed visiting the record store, and the reason behind this was due to the interactive conversations between him and the male staff who worked in the shop. In particular, he emphasised that the communication involved talking about personal interests and activities that can represent the male gender role, such as collecting records, playing video games, and football. In addition, he also stressed that he believed the record store was a male-dominated environment and that he preferred to discuss topics with the male employees even though there was a lady working in the store.

Alongside Brian's story, George's service experience (example 3) is another example showing how the vocal performance between the male customer and the male sales person can transform professional service into a more personalised level of social interaction, and thus to collectively portray masculine gender identity. Car-related interests and practices are often associated with the masculinity aspect of the male role and identity (Schroeder and Zwick, 2004). When the Nespresso sales assistant George served a gentleman in the store, he used his "Mercedes Benz" story as a metaphor to illustrate the point that the coffee machine had supreme quality. The narration of his experience activated the customer's side of competencies since he shared a similar interest and passion about cars. That is, the customer started to tell George his personal experiences about how he loved his Audi and the whole experience of consuming the car.

In sum, previous retail study has identified that the majority of male customers are task-oriented and that they require little or no interaction with sales personnel (Minahan and Beverland, 2005). This research has found that male customers are likely to get involved in conversation with sales people in shops as talking about such topics as sports and cars with another male can enhance their masculine identity. The vocal performance communicated through narrating the masculinity aspect of social-cultural activities bridges the relationship between the customer and the sales man and thus builds up a sort of fellowship or “mateship”.

Summary of the Gendered Story

Gender identity is considered to be one of the essential elements that contributes to the self-concept of the consumer (Solomon et al., 2010). *“People often conform to their culture’s expectations about how those of their gender should act, dress, speak, and so on”* (Solomon et al. 2010, p.153). The swapping of a gendered story can reveal various aspects of gender roles, gender stereotyping of values, and identity.

There are two types of personal story narrated when female customers interact with same gendered employees in a retail store: the femininity and feminist story. The exchange of the former is communicated through feminine cultures of consumerism, the female body and image as well as the ideology of “beauty”. As such, this type of story contains rich cultural meaning of feminine values, grooming rituals, modern female identity and desired image. By contrast, feminist values can be co-created by

life story swapping when both the female customer and sales person deploy cultural knowledge and beliefs about being independent, gender equality, and dissatisfaction about the subordinate position of women. In comparison with female-to-female interaction, male customers and salesmen are likely to co-construct their masculinity aspect of gender identity and values through building conversations around personal interests that most men are interested in, such as, football, cars, and record collections.

4.5 The Community Story – Tribalism and Collectivism Aspect of Values

The fourth theme of the personal life narrative that is deployed and exchanged by consumers and in-store sales people is the community story. The data collected from the two sets of interviews reveal that when the individuals concerned visited retail stores, they conducted conversations with the service providers regarding their life experiences and engaged in interactive behaviours about the online communities, consumer tribe participants, and local communities to which they belonged. As a consequence, the vocal interactions facilitated re-connection between community members and thus embraced the tribalism and collectivism aspects of meanings to the individual's shopping trip.

Example 1

When a gentleman visited the Nespresso boutique, he mentioned that he acquired the coffee information from “Facebook” and the response that Ralph was given (i.e. “*I saw those comments and I actually “liked” some of the posts*”) crossed the boundary

between the strangers, thereby transforming the customer-to-employee relationship into one of membership of an online community.

Ralph - I had a customer who came into work, we were talking about a special coffee blend called Kazaar, which was a limited edition, launched in 2010, intensity 12. The gentleman was wondering if we still have it in stock as he was very interested in trying and purchasing some. He mentioned he saw a lot of positive comments about the coffee on Facebook. Like people were saying how wonderful the taste was and how much they loved it. I said, oh yeah, I remember that coffee, I've tried it and I really liked it. It's interesting that people talk about it a lot on Facebook, saying it's such a shame that it was a limited edition, it only came out for a short period of time, and they really want the company to re-launch the coffee. I saw those comments and I actually "liked" some of the posts. I also mentioned there was an online petition that people were signing to try to get the coffee back as a permanent launch. The gentleman was excited to hear this and said he was going to go home and sign his name on the petition that night.

According to the passage above, when the gentleman visited the Nespresso store, he was asking the staff if he could purchase some coffee, which was a limited edition sold in 2010. In particular, he deployed a story about himself interacting with brand community members on Facebook to illustrate as to where he got the knowledge of the coffee and why he was interested in this special blend. The narrative given by the customer was a revelation of collectively created knowledge, values, and subcultures, since he revealed that the reputation and information of the coffee was co-constructed by online community fans.

In the meantime, as an employee of Nespresso, Ralph told the customer his side of the story about online community interactions, and his personal experiences were also enriched with collectively constructed opinions and beliefs. For example, he stressed that he saw the group members' discussion about how it was shameful that the coffee

was only a limited edition and how much the product enthusiasts wanted to bring it back. He also “*liked some of the posts*” to participate in the value co-creation process. It can be understood from the passage above, that Ralph and the gentleman both belonged to the Nespresso-related online community and they independently interacted with their group members in cyberspace. The storytelling and swapping in the retail environment allowed these community members to connect face-to-face, and thus identify each other as group members rather than just as consumer and seller. Consequently, the inter-personal interaction provided a medium for Ralph and his customer to co-interpret the meaning of consuming Nespresso as well as to co-promote the coffee.

Examples 2 – 4

In conjunction with example 1, three more examples were identified as belonging to this network-oriented retail category, with the first one being selected from the employees’ interviews, and the other two from interviewing customers. A summary of the informants’ passages is shown in Table 8.

Table 8 Informant Passages of the Community Story

Type of the life story	The community story
Definition	The personal life story about individuals' belonged/participated online communities, consumer tribes, and local communities.
Informant Passages	<p>Example 2</p> <p>George - I had a woman (customer) come in. I talked to her before, I sold her a machine. She was talking about trying to find a vegetarian delicatessen. Because she was talking about "I don't eat meat, I need to find a vegetarian delicatessen. So I was like "oh I know where you can go, because I always buy my vegetarian stuff from there. Vegetarian delicatessen was in Unicorn you might have heard of it where all the vegetarians go. It's very nice actually, people always talk to you, they will tell you something about their diet, why they don't eat meat, cruelty to animals that type of thing". So I started talking to her about that, about stuff sold in there, about meeting people in there. Every time she comes in, she goes "ah, I went to the vegetarian delicatessen, I've been to Unicorn, I've got some new recipes from people working in there, I've heard people were talking about this in the queue, blah blah blah". She always kind of engages with me, we always have conversations on things like vegetarianism, fair trade, or local sourcing.</p> <p>Example 3</p> <p>Jamie – I told this lady I hardly shop at supermarkets. I enjoy going to my local butchers, bakeries, food stores, and some retail shops. They are pretty much family owned small businesses; everything is produced locally on the premises. I like that. I also like the "buzz" in these shops. You can't help but being engaged (with other customers and staff), because there's a lot of chatter going on. They talk to the people in the queue. They talk to the people on the cash registers, a lot of banter and loud laughing going on. It's like being in a marketplace. The staff are always cheerful, they help you pack, put all the stuff that needs to be in paper bags before</p>

	<p>they put it in your thing (bag)...She could relate to me, she liked the idea that we should support our local businesses. She was saying “I’ve been doing my shopping at local stores every Saturday morning for almost 20 years, but it’s sad to see supermarket chains are slowly taking over our area, we should do something about it”.</p> <p>Example 4</p> <p>Sarah – I was chatting with this slightly older lady (sales assistant) in a dress shop. It turned out that we both come from the same area. I told her something about me, where I live and things like that. She asked me “have you been to the market on King Street”? I said “oh yeah, I have, I love going there every weekend. It reminds me of shopping in the old days, you can always run into your neighbours and people are genuinely nice. They always ask me about my parents, my children, and everything else. It’s more of a social place for me to be honest with you”. She said “that’s right. I enjoy going to my butcher, greengrocer, chicken shops, and fruiterer. People look after you beautifully. I don’t understand why more and more people like to shop from bigger chains”. She was very talkative, she then told me “oh, there is new coffee shop open in the market, just next to the barber, all their food is freshly prepared using local produce, you have to try it”.</p>
--	--

The first passage provides the revelation of online community-oriented personal life story swapping between the consumers and the sales personnel. In comparison with the first example that was given by Ralph, examples 2 – 4, as illustrated in Table 8, expose different conversation topics of the community story that were narrated by individuals, and the conversation varies from talking about vegetarianism to localism. As Gusfield (1975) states that there are two major conceptual issues associated with the term community. The first refers to the membership relationships, based upon

collective beliefs, ideologies, identities, and enthusiasms (Cova and Cova, 2002; McAlexand et al., 2002), whereas the second is determined more by geographical boundaries, which could include the local community, and neighbourhood.

Apart from the exchanging of personal stories about online communities (example 1), this research has found that customers and sales personnel who identify each other as having membership of the same consumption “tribe” also like to share and exchange their normative practices, rituals, and moral and social beliefs. The concept of “consumer tribe” refers a group of people with shared lifestyles, beliefs, practices, ideologies, and commitment to certain activities and/or products (Soloman et al., 2010). Unlike the brand community, people in the consumer tribe do not generally consume brands and products directly for their own sake, but seek to change their own lives by re-scripting their identities and twisting meanings (Cova et al., 2007).

One example of this tribe-oriented personal narrative swapping is shown by George’s conversation (example 2 in Table 8) with his customer about vegetarianism, ethical consumption, and sustainability. His quote suggests that people who share common beliefs, dietary lifestyles and practices regarding consuming non-meat or sustainable products tend to shop at certain stores as well as to interact with their “tribe” members in order to achieve either moral, cultural, religious or philosophical ideologies or for health purposes.

When Nespresso employee George served a female customer, the lady highlighted that she was a vegetarian and she only shopped at certain stores. This vocal behaviour suggests that the consumer aimed to spread or even promote her beliefs and practices to the sales person. In the meantime, George's reply of "*I always buy my vegetarian stuff there*", allowed the service provider and the customer to identify each other as "tribe" members, and thus to form a relationship through shared lifestyles (e.g. non-meat diet), values (e.g. ethical and/or moral values towards animal cruelty), and products (e.g. abstaining from consuming animal by-products), that they jointly consumed as part of their tribal affiliation. As a consequence, the swapping of personal narratives embraced special meanings in the lady's retail experience in that she would associate her shopping trip with vegetarianism and ethical consumption.

In comparison with the examples explained above, examples 3 and 4 reveal a different dimension of the community that individuals can belong to, that of the local neighbourhood. According to Table 8, the passages from consumers Jamie and Sarah illustrate how the consumer service experience can be co-created through the exchange of a local community story and thus embed special meanings about localism, neighbourhood connections, and anti-chain store consumerism during shopping trips. For instance, Jamie initially narrated to the sales assistant that he "*hardly shop at supermarkets*", and "*enjoy going to local butchers, bakeries, food stores, and some retail shops*". As the sales person, and also the value co-creator, the employee shared similar beliefs and practices with her customer and so added a narrative about herself regarding how she had been supporting local shops for "*almost 20 years*", to show understanding of the need for the promotion of localism.

Both Jamie and Sarah's swapped local community stories have helped provide better understanding about the story teller and swapper's (i.e. the consumer and sales consultant) stock of operant resources from the collectivist point of view rather than just the individualist level. For example, when Jamie was narrating his experiences of visiting local stores, he emphasised that "*there's a lot of chatter going on. They talk to the people in the queue. They talk to the people on the cash registers, a lot of banter and loud laughing going on*". This information reveals that the network connections were collectively creating human actions and that the values and ideologies of localism gradually emerged in Jamie's stock of social and cultural resources. In the case of Sarah, she mentioned that she considered the local market as a "*social place*", which suggests that she could socialise with her neighbours, catch up with local happenings, and watch or listen to people interacting with each other. In this case, the direct and indirect interactions with Sarah's local community members created a source for the formation of network-centric sociocultural knowledge and competencies.

Summary of the Community Story

The fourth type of the personal life story that a consumer can deploy and exchange is the community story. When individuals visit a retail store, they and the service providers conduct conversations based on their personal experiences regarding their interactive online brand or non-brand communities, consumer tribes, or local geographical communities. The storytelling of one's community story in retail stores assists the transformation of the professional consumer and supplier aspects of

identities to the communal identity of community membership. In addition, the vocal interaction facilitates group members (i.e. the consumer and the sales person) to connect with each other in a physical location (i.e. the retail store) so as to interact and learn together. Regarding this, people gathering together in real life is important for knowledge in practice and value-in-use as information can be communicated better, more quickly, and more efficiently. Also, face-to-face communication plays a crucial role in “*maintaining the solidarity among their members*” (Gabriel 2008, p.42).

Moreover, the narrated community story can reveal an individual’s stock of operant resources from both the individualist and collectivist perspectives. Regarding the latter, marketing scholars and consumer culture theorists propose that when people gather together in brand-related communities, consumer tribes, or other consumption/non-consumption groups, they co-create or reinterpret values, meanings, and experiences (Cova et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2008), and these collectively create beliefs, rituals, meanings, and identities gradually emerge as a person’s sociocultural aspect of his/her operant resources (Arnould et al., 2006; Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Further, when the consumers and staff deploy their community-related narratives, these dynamic and network created values, knowledge and normative activities become activated.

4.6 Summary of Findings Part 1

It has been explained in the introduction chapter that this study had the goal of examining the roles of consumer-to-employee interaction in facilitating the value-in-

use process. Consequently, two of my research questions are as follows: 1) Through what way(s) does a consumer co-creates his/her retail experience with the sales person in the retail store? 2) What are the detail elements of the consumer's operant resources that individuals deploy through the consumer-to-employee interaction? The findings considered in this section allow for these two research questions to be addressed. That is, the consumers co-create their retail experiences with the sales personnel through the medium of life story swapping. And four themes of the personal life narrative are associated with different aspects of the values, meanings, identities, and ideology.

When consumers interact with the sales personnel, they often deploy certain types of the life narrative (i.e. the family story, the tragedy story, the gendered story, and/or community story) in order to co-construct their values, beliefs, and identities as well as to embrace special meanings in their shopping experiences. An important condition for this resource in the integration process is it requires both the consumer and sales personnel to share communal life experiences, values, and beliefs. During the interaction, the customers tend to be the key performers in initiating conversations and determining conversation topics regarding their personal lives. On the other hand, as some sales people (e.g. Jade, Liam, and other Nespresso employees) mentioned in their interviews, they would deploy people skills to "read" their customers in order to find out their true needs and shopping purposes.

It has been found that each type of the life story is associated with different aspects of the social and cultural resources of the consumers. First, the family story is

communicated through family values, kinship, and loving relations. Second, the tragedy story refers to a traumatic event and is often associated with great suffering, grieving, and the co-creation of the meaning of life. Third, the gendered story happens when the consumers interact with the same gendered sales personnel, and it often exposes gender roles and gender stereotypes. Under the circumstance of female consumers to female sales personnel interaction, femininity-related values, grooming rituals, desired feminine image as well as feminist-centred beliefs, gender equality, and dissatisfaction about the subordinate position of women have been found in thesis data. On the other hand, male customers and sales men are likely to co-construct their masculinity aspect of gender identity and values through storytelling about football, cars, and/or records collections. And finally, the fourth type of the personal narrative is the community story. It is swapped under the condition that both the consumer and the sales person belong or used to belong to the same online communities, consumer tribes, and/or local communities. The community storytelling and swapping imbues the consumer's shopping experience with network-related meanings, belief identities, and subcultures.

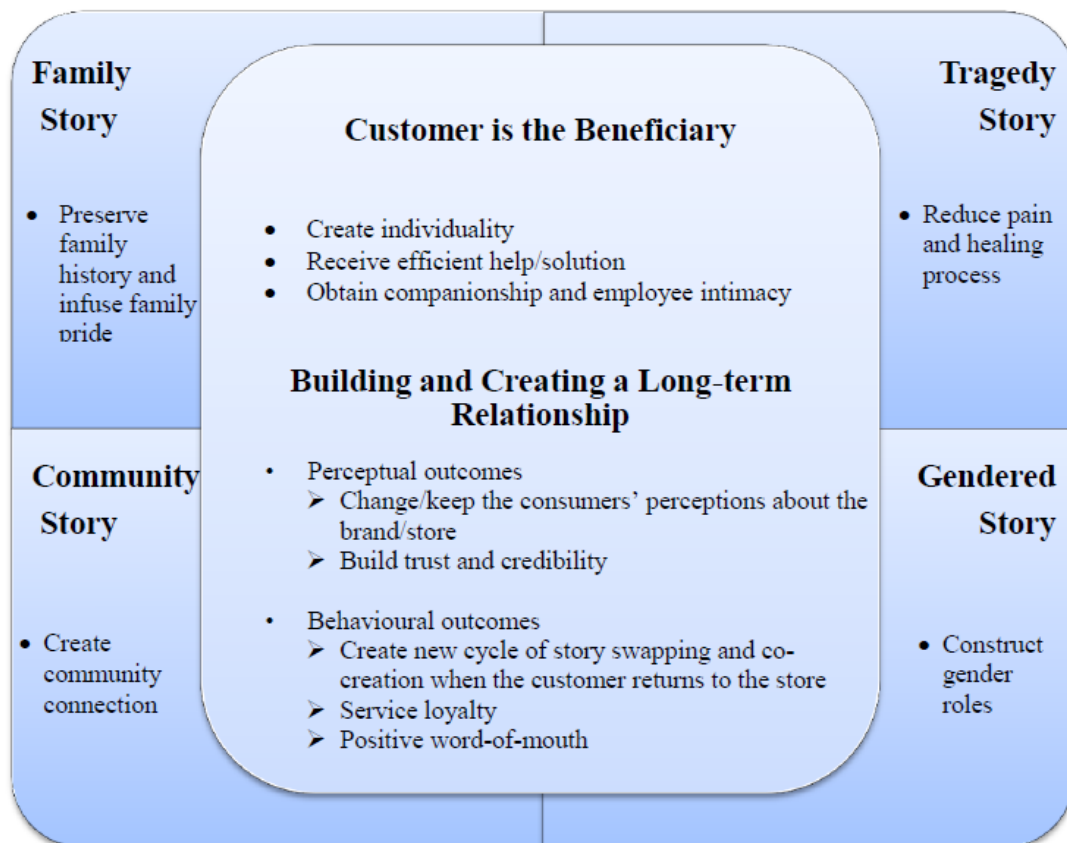
Findings Part 2

Outcomes of the Life Story Swapping Aspect of the Consumer-to-Employee Interaction

4.7 Introduction

One of the research objectives of this thesis was to investigate the various outcomes that are associated with the personalised and unique perspectives of the retail experience. The collected interview data suggest that the vocal interaction of storytelling and exchanging between the consumers and sales personnel in the retail store generate two types of general outcomes: first, the consumer is the beneficiary; and second, the building and creating of long-term customer relationships. In addition, apart from the general outcomes, the data indicate that each type of personal story not only shares the general outcomes, but also has its own distinctive one, which is unique to the type of the narrative. A summary of the general outcomes and distinctive ones is provided in Figure 7.

Figure 7 General Outcomes and Four Types of Distinctive Outcome



4.8 General Outcomes

As a result of the life storytelling and swapping investigation, two types of general outcomes are elicited. The first refers to the consumer's side of gaining and explains how the customers have become beneficiaries by the creation of individuality, receiving efficient help or possible solutions for life issues, and obtaining companionship and employee intimacy.

The second type of the general outcome tends to focus more on the retailer's side of customer relationship building and maintaining, and this relationship development is constructed by perceptual and behavioural sub-outcomes. The perceptual outcome includes two elements, which are: 1) change or keep the consumer's perceptions about the brand and/or the store; and 2) build trust and credibility, whilst the behavioural outcome covers the customers' actions, including: 1) create a new cycle of story swapping and a co-creation process when the customer returns to the store; 2) service loyalty; and 3) positive word-of-mouth.

4.8.1 Customer is the Beneficiary

Vargo and Lusch (2008) stress that “*value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary (i.e., customer)*” (p. 7). In this thesis it has been elicited that one of the general outcomes that is caused by the life storytelling and exchanging between the consumer and employee in a retail store is that the customer is the beneficiary. This consumer-oriented outcome is constructed from three elements. First, it creates individuality for the consumer and second, the receiving of efficient help and/or solution. The help or solution could relate to tangible help, such as finding an appropriate or meaningful product, but it could also refer to intangible help, such as seeking moral support, an answer or a solution to a life issue, or achieving a personal goal, image, and/or identity. The final benefit that a consumer can obtain is companionship.

4.8.1.1 Creating Individuality

The data suggest the creation of individuality and uniqueness is one of the consumer-oriented benefits available after the individuals conduct interactive conversation about their personal life with the sales personnel in the retail store. Previous research assumes that personalised service is about the service provider satisfying the customers by such gestures as offering a smile, making eye contact, delivering a greeting or making small talk (Surprenant and Solomon, 1987). By contrast, the findings of this thesis reveal that personalised and unique aspects of customer service are built based on the two-way interaction and resource collaboration through engaging with people's personal lives. In the following table, two examples are given in order to explain how conversations involving engagement with people's lives can make the consumer feel special and unique.

Examples 1 – 2

Table 9 Informant Passages of Creating Individuality

Customer is the Beneficiary	Informant Passages
Creating Individuality	<p>Example 1</p> <p>Sarah – I’m buying from smaller retailers rather than the bigger chains and it’s that acknowledgment sometimes I can get from people (sales assistants). In one shop where I go and my parents also shop and they’ll always remark on my parents, they would say they haven’t seen them for a while, where have they been and are they well. It’s that little personal touch sometimes you need, for someone to acknowledge you.</p> <p>Example 2</p> <p>Grace – There’s a couple of staff that work there (a fabric store), one of them is a charming fellow, and he’s got to know myself and Gary, because we go in there a bit. He will stop and chat with you, the staff are always friendly and they will say “Oh we haven’t seen you for ages, what have you been doing”? It’s very welcoming, but it’s more about how you feel. It’s about how you think yourself and it’s special of that sort... I don’t know why, yes perhaps I do, I was adopted at birth, perhaps that’s why it’s so important for me to express who I am, because I was growing up in a different family.</p>

Examples 1 and 2 in Table 9 illustrate how the storytelling aspect of the vocal interaction can lead to a pleasant and personalised retail experience for the shoppers. To be more precise, customer Sarah stresses that she prefers doing her shopping at “*smaller retailers rather than the bigger chains*”. Her preference for the chosen shopping environment can be interpreted as her searching for the creation of uniqueness and individuality, with her saying such things as “*acknowledgement*” and

“personal touch”. That is, this indicates her wish to reap intangible benefits, which she believed could get by shopping at smaller stores, and vocally interacting with the staff. In particular, she stressed that she liked to go to one shop that her parents also went to, because the shop assistants would always recognise her and engaged with her by asking her about her parents, thus showing they cared about her as an individual rather than just someone who handed over money.

In addition to Sarah’s example, customer Grace also mentioned in her interview that one of her shopping goals was to *“express who I am”*. This statement suggests that this female customer aimed to utilise shopping as a medium to express her unique personality and character. Moreover, the passage highlighted that she was impressed with the service that the staff provided in the fabric store, because the sales people were willing to conduct conversations with her and engage with her at the personal level. As a result of their recognising the client as an individual person, she received what she expected from the customer service, and as she saw herself as being treated as special she was the beneficiary of the integration of resources.

4.8.1.2 Receive Efficient Help and/or Solution

This research has found when individuals visit the retail stores, they not only search for identity and meaning making (Arnould and Thompson, 2005), but they also seek efficient help and/or possible solutions. This could relate to tangible help, such as finding an appropriate or meaningful product, but it could also refer to intangible help,

such as, seeking empathy, a possible solution to a life issue, or creating identity. In sum, sometimes consumers tend to search for tangible help, sometimes they look for the intangible form, and at times they need a combination of both. Moreover, the collected interview data suggest that help seekers (i.e. the consumers) often embed their questions in the form of a vocal story that they can get answers to after receiving the life story of the sales people.

Examples 1 – 2

Table 10 Informant Passages of Receiving Efficient Help and/or Solution

Customer is the Beneficiary	Informant Passages
Receiving Efficient Help and/or a Solution	<p>Example 1</p> <p>Isabella – I went to this clothes shop, I only wanted to buy a skirt, but I ended up buying the whole outfit. I was asking a girl (sales assistant) for some advice because she dressed really nice. I explained to her “I am going to a party next week, I don’t know what to wear, I’ve just bought a pair of shoes, I am planning to get a skirt to match the shoes, but I’m not so sure, what do you think”? I showed her my new shoes. She said “I love your shoes, where did you get them from and blah blah blah”...I asked her if she can style me up as Kate Moss because I absolutely adore her, I love her style, I love how she puts things together, and I always want to lose some weight to get that slim look... She then went around the shop, brought several dresses, blouses, necklaces, belts, and everything. She said “OK, try this on with these, try this on with the belt and etc etc”. I was like “I really like the outfit you put on for me, you are really good”. She said “I always have this passion for fashion, I like to get dressed up, and I like to dress people up, it’s like a drug. When I was younger, I used to always watch Pretty Women, I like that type of feeling when you feel beautiful and feminine”.</p> <p>Example 2</p> <p>Liam – A gentleman came in, he mentioned to me that he wanted to purchase some coffee, but didn’t know which one</p>

	<p>he likes. I said “that’s ok, let’s look at your account to see which one it was”. And he mentioned that “oh, I’m not too sure if I’ve got an account, I don’t really like the idea of having an account, because someone’s got my details, so it worries me”. Now at this point, I was trying to reassure him and I relate this to my personal experience in terms of giving my details out. So I said to him, some person stopped me on the street, and asked me if I could put my name down for a charity? I gave him my name, and I gave him my email address. So he had my details and he had my number. And since that point, this email address has been bombarded with loads of scamp emails and junk emails. So after I explained that he said “oh OK, try this postcode, he gave me his postcode, I put it on computer, by looking at his account, I was able to try to see which one you normally get. The gentleman bought the coffee and he came in on Monday, he went, it was the right coffee, it was really good, thanks for that and went on his way.</p>
--	--

It can be interpreted from the examples that are listed in Table 10, that possible solutions were advanced after personal life storytelling and exchanging between the consumers and the employees. For customer Isabella, she received efficient help as she reinforced her female gender image as well as her finding meaningful products. In the case of Liam’s client, the storytelling and swapping aspects of customer-to-sales person interaction facilitated the gentleman to find the right product as well as to reduce his worrying.

It is understood from example 1, when Isabella visited the clothes store, she started to tell a piece of personal information to the sales lady, which was that she was going to attend a party, but she had no idea what to dress up in. In addition, she was giving detailed personal information about her desire to achieve Kate Moss’s style. The narrated story implies that as a female individual Isabella was conscious about her

female body image and gender role identity. In addition, her narrative was sending the sales person the message that she hoped she could help her in creating feminine-related values and identity as well as finding the ideal products. As to the sales person herself, she exhibited communal values and desires about being feminine, when she mentioned that *“I like to get dressed up, and I like to dress people up, when I was younger, I used to watch Pretty Women all the time, I like that feeling when you feel beautiful and feminine”*. That is, the sales person could relate to her customer, and importantly, she was able to interpret her “true” needs. This made it possible for her to provide efficient help in the form of constructing the whole outfit to Isabella’s great satisfaction.

Similar to Isabella’s example, Nespresso staff Liam’s passage also reveals that storytelling and swapping could assist the sales assistant to figure out the customer’s concerns and thus to provide possible solutions. His information shows how a male customer was not so sure which type of coffee he used to consume. The assistant manager, Liam, was trying to assist him by accessing his customer’s account to find out his purchasing history. However, the customer told Liam about his personal concern about giving his details to people. At this point, instead of being either pushy or ignorant, Liam used his personal story about his email account being *“bombed”* to illustrate the fact that he could totally understand his customer’s worry. As a consequence of the personal conversation there was better communication, which broke down the barriers between the two strangers, and led to the building of a trustworthy relationship, because the customer could acknowledge that the professional employee, Liam, was aware of confidentiality and security matters. In the

end, the gentleman gave his personal details and made purchases in the store, leaving it in a happy mood.

4.8.1.3 Obtaining Companionship and Employee Intimacy

Apart from the creation of individuality and receiving efficient help, the consumer can also gain a sense of personal friendship and companionship as well as receiving intimacy and commitment from the story swapping partner (i.e. the sales person).

Example 1

The following passage from Nespresso employee Linda provides an example to illustrate the companionship establishment through the story swapping aspect of consumer-to-employee interaction in the retail environment.

Linda – This woman who came in always tells me something about her daughter. I've got a daughter, she's the same age as hers. So she would say "how is she, how is she getting on? How's her school and stuff like that"... She said to me "do you want to give me your phone number, so maybe we can meet up apart from work sometimes, because she's got a daughter, as same age as my daughter. "maybe we can take them out sometime of the day or be friends" I said "yeah" and she texted me up "whenever you free, I know you are probably busy over Christmas, but whenever you get free time, let me know, maybe we can meet up somewhere".

According to the quote, Linda and one of her female customers often exchanged personal information about their young daughters. This vocal behaviour was built based on the reality that Linda and her client were both mothers, who shared the same

identity, similar experiences and values in nursing, caring, and bring up their children. The fact that they always exchange stories about their own children created an interpersonal relationship beyond the professional consumer-to-employee relationship. That is, it had moved in this direction, because the lady suggested they should meet up outside of the work place and the two started to engage in some activities that friends would normally do, such as exchanging phone numbers, contacting each other, and agreeing to take their daughters out together.

Examples 2 – 3

In conjunction with Linda's quote, two more examples are provided, and they are summarised in Table 11. The second example shares some similarities with Linda's story, which is companionship establishment, whereas the third provides an expression of employee intimacy.

Table 11 Informant Passages of Obtaining Companionship and Employee Intimacy

Customer is the Beneficiary	Informant Passages
Obtaining Companionship and Employee Intimacy	<p>Example 2</p> <p>Grace – With my weekly shopping I draw on experience based on friendships and most of the shopping I do is actually done in the same way. I shop every Saturday and I get up in the morning and I go to some green grocers. They look after me beautifully. There's a friendship in the interaction, so you travel all that way just to go to the green grocers, but it's part of what I do, it's part of my life, so I drop in there and say hello to people... These people help me exist in society, which is somewhat isolated in many ways, so that I don't feel isolated. Places to go, people to see, all of that stuff I think it does for me.</p> <p>Example 3</p> <p>Rose – He basically told me things about how he had gone for a new role which hasn't work for him so well, he took regret of making the wrong decision really. I tried to offer him a coffee, and really to be empathetic, and tried to be as affectionate as I could be. When he returned, he was very appreciative, he told me how he felt like I was really helped him, because how I was there and listened, and I gave him advice and support when he needed it...I won't get too specific, you know, things like that, they are very personal things. And the nice thing was he felt, like, trusting towards me to be able to tell me all that information...it's quite personal, I have to be careful, because he told me in confidence really.</p>

According to example 2, this shows that Grace purposively shopped around at her local markets on a weekly basis. The major reason why she enjoyed interacting with her local stores was that she considered people who worked in them as friends and so she gained companionship. It can be seen that people who owned or worked at these

stores often conducted personal conversation with her and cared about her life situation during her visits. In particular, Grace stressed that these people “*help her exist in the society*”, and they made her feeling accepted and that she belonged. As result of the human interaction of talking about personal lives, customer Grace considered the shop workers as friends or even family, and also she valued having their company as witnessed by the fact that she travelled for quite a long distance to visit the grocers.

Apart from the obtaining of companionship, customers can also receive intimacy from the employees, which in this context is similar to companionship since it is defined as “*close familiarity or friendship*” (Oxford University Press, 2013). However, in comparison with the companionship, intimacy refers more to the affective responses that sales personnel are willing to give to their customers. A number of researchers (e.g. Beatty et al., 1996; Fournier et al., 1998; Treacy and Wiersema, 1992) have studied intimacy in the context of relationship marketing to illustrate that emotional support, respect for privacy, and friendship can shape intimate relationships. As an extension of the intimate relationship study, findings in this research can provide insight for understanding better about the intimacy building through the lens of value-in-use perspective. Example 3 listed in Table 11 offers an explanation on how sales personnel are willing to give commitment, offer empathy and sympathy, and preserve confidentiality for the customers.

According to example 3, Nespresso sales consultant Rose revealed a little bit information about one of her customers being very depressed about his life problems and wrong career choices. When I asked Rose to give me more details about the story from each side, she refused to tell me because she believed they were “*very personal things*” and that her customer trusted her when she agreed that the story was “*in confidence*”. Hence, it can be interpreted that Rose had developed a sense of closeness with her customer, and she was willing to protect his confidential information as she was a friend. These affective and behavioural responses show signs of commitment, bonding, and intimacy.

4.8.2 Building and Maintaining a Long-lasting Customer Relationship

According to the interview outcomes, the co-creation of a personalised and unique retail experience through life storytelling and exchanging between the service providers and the consumers could facilitate the establishment and maintenance of long lasting customer relationships. Figure 7 illustrates that the customer relationship building is formed in two respects: the impacts on individual perceptions and these people’s behaviours.

The perceptual outcome includes two elements, which are: 1) change or keep the consumer’s perceptions about the brand and/or the store; and 2) build trust and credibility. First of all, this research has elicited that the positive service experience that a consumer co-creates with the sales person through discussing personal lives can

blur the memory of a negative shopping experience that a consumer experienced before. That is, it can compensate for the prior bad scenario and thus change or keep their perceptions towards the brand and/or the store. Over the decades, many researchers have investigated the term trust in order to make a contribution to relationship marketing (Ganesan, 1994; Lindgreen, 2001; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). According to the interviews, from both of the consumer and employee perspectives, the storytelling and swapping aspects of the consumer-to-employee interactions in the retail stores could facilitate the establishment of trustworthiness, thereby building upon the positive aspect of consumer perceptions about the store/service provider, and thus enhancing customer relationships.

The second aspect that contributes to the formation of customer relationship building and maintenance is the behavioural responses of the consumers. This includes: 1) creating a new cycle of story swapping and a co-creation process when the customer returns to the store; 2) service loyalty; and 3) positive word-of-mouth. Regarding the first type, it has been discovered that an individual who had an experience of narrating and exchanging his or her life story with the sales person on a previous shopping trip, on returning, could interact based on a previous topic of conversation or might conduct a new discussion concerning his or her personal life. Customer loyalty and word-of-mouth have been discussed by some researchers who study commercial friendship. For example, Price and Arnould (1999) claim that commercial friendship building through customer satisfaction, service loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth is crucial when fostering consumer relationships. In addition, according to Otnes et al.'s (2012) recently published article, the use of ritual language by the service provider

can lead to customer satisfaction and loyalty, and thus enhance the commercial friendship.

4.8.2.1 Perceptual Outcome – Change or Keep the Consumer’s Perceptions about the Brand/Store

When some of the customers were suffering from prior unpleasant shopping experiences, a positive and personalised customer service, which showed they cared about their lives, could change their perceptions about the brand and/or the store. Two passages summarised in Table 12 are examples that illustrate how the story swapping aspect of inter-personal interaction can lead to the brand/store-related perceptual outcome.

Examples 1 – 2

Table 12 Informant Passages of Changing/Keeping the Consumer’s Perceptions

Perceptual Outcome	Informant Passages
Change or keep the consumer’s perceptions about the brand/store	<p>Example 1</p> <p>Brian – I just walked into the records store, this particular guy said “what have you got” because I had just been to another records store. So he’s already started to give me a hard time. “oh, you’ve been shopping there, what have you got”? I said “well...none of your business what I’ve got”. And so he actually snatched my bag off me and looked into it...that was a negative thing, but then the service (i.e., story swapping of the masculinity story, page 131) and the design of the store is so good. It was funny, most people wouldn’t go back because of what had happened...It’s such a place</p>

	<p>that I have to go, it doesn't really matter, I still go in there, I do find it enjoyable because they (the staff) are friendly and they have a laugh with you.</p> <p>Example 2</p> <p>Liam – Customers will tell us experiences that they have dealt with Nespresso in another area. Could be over the phone, in the store, or be with the delivery driver who delivered their coffee. So they were talking about a previous experience related with Nespresso, so their vision of Nespresso was not good, but when they are coming here to have a good experience, they tell you “aww, I wasn't really sure about Nespresso because of this happened, but I am happy now, because it's a positive experience. I really can't thank you enough for it, you know, there are so many times where I've been in such and such a place. They gave me poor customer service. This person wasn't even interested, he just wanted to sell me the product, no one interested why I need it, no one cared about me”.</p>
--	--

According to the first example listed in Table 12, even though the consumer Brian had had a negative shopping experience in the records store, the established friendship through story swapping allowed him to keep a positive perception towards it. That is, as revealed in the masculinity story, he had built a strong rapport with the male staff who worked at the records store since they always exchanged their life stories regarding personal interests of records, games, and other such activities that most men are interested in. Moreover, Brian highlighted in his interview that he acknowledged the employees on a “*first name basis*”, which implied that they had developed a sense of closeness and mateship through the male gender roles.

It can be understood from the quote that Brian was treated badly by one of the staff, who worked at the records store. However, the previous pleasant and personalised

service experiences reduced the potential damage and compensated for the bad shopping experience. That is, it seems that the negative aspect of the customer service did not change his perception towards the store, for he said he would still return since he enjoyed the staff who he could “*have a laugh*” with and with whom he exchanged conversation about personal lives and interests.

In comparison with Brian’s passage, example 2 represents the consumers’ perceptions change from the sales personnel’s perspective. It can be interpreted from the passage that some of the Nespresso customers classified poor customer service as the lack of human interaction. More precisely, these consumers were narrating their prior bad shopping experiences to the sales person Liam in order to raise the issue that the sales personnel who worked at other stores were not interested in asking them questions about why they needed the products or “*caring*” for them as individuals.

By contrast, the consumers classified the interaction with Liam a “*positive experience*” since as he emphasised earlier in his interview, the majority of the time he engaged with his clients at a more personal level. As a consequence, the pleasant and unique service experience that Liam co-created with some of the customers had a relatively strong impact on their perceptions towards the brand, for as one put it, “*I wasn’t really sure about Nespresso because of this happened, but I am happy now, because it’s a positive experience*”. Additionally, some customers emphasised “*I really can’t thank you enough for it*” to express their feeling about how much the personal service meant to them.

4.8.2.2 Perceptual Outcome – Build Trust and Credibility

In addition to keeping or changing consumers' perceptions about the brand and/or store, this thesis has also found that building trust and credibility can also contribute to perceptual outcomes.

Example 1

The following information from customer Rachel demonstrates that the vocal interaction involving the narration of personal lives between the sales representative and the consumer can help the service provider to gain customer trust and credibility, and thus increase the consumer's willingness to form the relationship.

Rachel – [story swapping of the femininity story, page 120]...I used to not think that she was a cheeky or sly sales person, and I miss her because the company made her redundant.

It can be seen that Rachel used to have bad impressions about sales personnel since used the words "*cheeky*" and "*sly*" to describe her impressions about sales people, which implies that she did not trust the people who worked in retailing. However, the stereotype of being cheeky and sly was not applicable to the sales person who served her since that member of staff was interested in her customer's life and cared about her. The reason behind the change of perception towards the sales assistant was due to the vocal communication and interaction that Rachel conducted with the lady in the shop.

This was identified earlier in the femininity story, when she connected and bonded with the sales lady through narrating femininity and grooming stories when she was going to purchase some clothes. That is, the interpersonal relationship and closeness that were established through the shared values and same gender identity produced a sense of friendship, and a trustworthy relationship between the consumer and the staff member. In addition, Rachel emphasised that she “*miss her*” after she got made redundant by the company. This affection indicates that the established trustworthiness and inter-personal relationship played important roles in her consumption.

Examples 2 – 3

Table 13 provides a summary of two more examples that support the above finding in relation to building trust. Regarding the informants’ passages, example 2 represents the customer’s point of view, whilst example 3 provides the employee’s standpoint.

Table 13 Informant Passages of Building Trust and Credibility

Perceptual Outcome	Informant Passages
Building trust and credibility	<p>Example 2</p> <p>Katie – I went to Bonny Girl with my daughters. A lot of the clothes are from Asia, and I picked up something that was a large and I thought I would be lucky to get my legs in...I actually said to the sales girl, “you shouldn’t sell things that are so tiny. Look, both of my daughters are very upset because they had to buy a large in some items, and they are only size 10. No wonder people turn into anorexics”. But it was amazing that she commented, she said she didn’t have any clothes from the stores, because she couldn’t fit in to them. Then we were just having a friendly chat. So it didn’t</p>

	<p>turn out to be a bad experience at all even though I hated the store...I liked her honesty, and I felt I could trust her.</p> <p>Example 3</p> <p>George – You kind of find out what the customer is more passionate about. If it's the quality, or if it's the convenience, or whatever. And then, I kind of talk about that, they seem to really enjoy to engage with me in a personal level, which kind of gives them more trust in me. I wasn't like, "oh, just buy this, and give me more money". I actually had a real opinion on something that is legitimate, not something that I just make up. Yeah, I think they really enjoyed that because they started to talk about their lives as well on how they like particular things on how they try to get the best they can for the money they can.</p>
--	---

Consumer Katie's story (example 2) shared similarities with Rachel's, but instead of having doubts about sales people, she "*hated*" the store and its products. She went to a clothes store with her daughters, she was unhappy with the fact that both of them got upset about the smaller sizing of the clothes, being conscious of their body images. Therefore, she brought up this issue in discussion with the sales lady. In return, the sales lady told Katie a true story of her own, saying that she did not shop in the store either since she could not fit into the clothes. Subsequently, this verbal response led to the building of a trustworthy relationship between the two, because as Katie highlighted "*I liked her honesty, and I felt I could trust her*". Furthermore, the established trustworthy relationship appears to have had an impact on the customer's perception towards the whole retail experience, because although she expressed that she "*hated*" the store, she did not classified her shopping experience as a negative one.

Apart from customers Rachel and Katie's examples, the Nespresso employee George's contribution also reveals that the exchange of personal narratives could facilitate the service provider to gain trust and thus increase the customer's engagement and help in relationship building. As George mentioned in this interview, he tended to utilise the narration of his personal experiences as a tool to communicate with his customers in order to explain the function, quality, and other characteristics of the products he sold. The storytelling aspect of the service allowed him to build trustworthiness with his clients, because the deployment of personal narratives connected him with their: daily lives, practices, or even the mundane. That is, the connection and personal touch could transmit his opinions and recommendations into reliable and "*legitimate*" resources and knowledge. As a result of the storytelling, the customers would drop their guard, and start to open up to him about their lives, personal stories, and passions.

4.8.2.3 Behavioural Outcome – Create a New Cycle of Story Swapping and the Co-creation Process

The creation of new cycle of story swapping and a new round of the co-creation process has been found to be one of the behavioural outcomes that constructs the establishment and maintaining of the relationship between the consumer and the employee/company. The creation of new cycle of story swapping means that when the customers return to the store, they most likely prefer to be served by the sales person who previously exchanged information or experience regarding their personal lives. Sometimes, the consumers or the sales assistants will continuously develop

conversations based on previous topics of conversation or start off new ones about their personal lives. Under these circumstances, the life story swapping aspect of consumer-to-employee interaction facilitates a new cycle of personal storytelling and exchange, and consequently leads to a new process of values, rituals, and meanings co-creation.

Example 1

It was mentioned in the family story that customer Charlotte went to a bridal shop to purchase a wedding dress and she had a conversation with an older sales lady that led to the co-creation of the importance of family kinship and values.

Charlotte – [story swapping of the family story, page 105]...I went back to visit her, I wanted to show her photos of my wedding ceremony, tell her how much people loved my wedding dress, and where we went for our honeymoon.

It can be interpreted from the information above that the storytelling and swapping about individual family members and events and the meanings associated with the service experience had become memorable and unique for Charlotte. Moreover, the established rapport had driven her to return to the store to update the sales lady some new stories about her life, such as showing the photos of her wedding and telling her about the honeymoon. In this case, these new stories of Charlotte activated the sales lady's side of the story, with her relating memories about her wedding ceremony and honeymoon, thus creating a chance for a new cycle of experience and value co-construction.

Examples 2 – 4

Apart from customer Charlotte’s interview, examples from Nespresso sales assistants Rose and George are also provided in order to explain how the vocal interaction of story swapping can lead to a new cycle of storytelling and exchanging. A summary of these quotes is shown in Table 14.

Table 14 Informant Passages of Creating a New Cycle of Story Swapping and the Co-creation Process

Behavioural Outcome	Informant Passages
Creating a New Cycle of Story Swapping and the Co-creation Process	<p>Example 2</p> <p>Rose – he (the customer) was upset, but he felt he was being helped because I basically had listened to him and gave him some support, and I gave him a little bit of advice as well. So, the next time he visited us, he told me how he had moved on, and how he had found a different job to make him happier.</p> <p>Example 3</p> <p>George – [story swapping of the masculinity story, page 131]...Yeah we still talk to each other. We still talk about the same kind of thing. It’s always about me being engaged, I found out later on that he’s really into pretty nice food, we talk about stuff like that as well.</p> <p>Example 4</p> <p>George – [story swapping of the community story, page 137]...Every time she comes in, she goes “ah, I went to Vegetarian delicatessen, I’ve been to Unicorn, I’ve got some new recipes from people working in there, I’ve heard people were talking about this in the queue, blah blah blah”. She always kind of engages with me, we always have conversations on things like vegetarianism, fair trade, or local sourcing.</p>

It can be understood from the second example that the sales assistant of Nespresso, Rose, talked through some life issues with her male client. As a result of this interpersonal interaction, the gentleman went back to visit her to narrate more of his life stories. For example, the customer updated Rose on how he had moved on with his life and how he felt about his new job.

George's interview also illustrates how engagement with customers at the personal level can drive consumers to provide further information about their lives when they revisit a store. Previously, a gentleman connected with George through the exchange of personal narratives about their enthusiasm towards cars. The shared male gender roles and masculinity aspect of gender identity and values can bridge the consumer-to-sales person relationship as well as the service loyalty. According to example 3, when the consumer returned to the store, he and George would continuously build conversations based on their common interests and activities, for as the latter shared *"We still talk about the same kind of thing"*. Additionally, when the conversation flowed and developed, they started to cover new conversation topics, such as talking about nice food.

The forth example that was given by George also reveals the behavioural outcome caused by interactive conversation and it comes from a section of the community story. He was discussing vegetarianism and ethical consumption with his customer in the store, recommending that she visited some new vegetarian and local stores. From the passage above, it can be seen that when the female customer returned to the store,

she updated him about her new activities with stories about visiting the store he recommended and interacting with people in the shop.

4.8.2.4 Behavioural Outcome – Service Loyalty

In this thesis, it has been elicited that one of the behavioural outcomes regarding relationship building through consumer-to-employee vocal interactions is customers' loyalty to the sales personnel in the store. The following three quotations are examples to illustrate this finding. Customers Rachel and Grace indicated that they would be "*loyal*" to the people who served them and cared about them at the personal level. Meanwhile, from a sales person's point of view, Linda revealed that her clients would be loyal to her service since she always conducted interactive conversation and exchanged personal information.

Example 1

Previously, Rachel shared a piece of her story with the sales lady when she was shopping for clothes. She received a pleasant service experience as her grooming and femininity values were recognised and integrated by the sales person, with these values being communicated through the exchange of personal stories. The information below shows Rachel's behaviour as a result of the femininity story swapping.

Rachel – I will go to M&S and buy them (clothes), but that was the point, because they had a girl there, who was absolutely fantastic...[story swapping of the femininity story, page 120]

Rachel's interview shows that in comparison with other stores, she would like to return to a certain store (i.e. M&S) to make purchases. This behaviour reveals that this female consumer tended to be loyal to the service provider, because the sales lady was interested in discussing with her how to put the clothes together, which thus created the femininity aspect of value and ideology. The phrase "*that was the point*" used by her highlights that the storytelling and exchanging of the femininity story with the lady working in M&S was the key to determining where she shopped and who she made purchases from.

Examples 2 – 3

In addition to Rachel's passage, the quote from Grace (example 2) has also revealed the behavioural response of service loyalty from the customer perspective. Moreover, the third example listed in Table 15 provides insights regarding these behaviours from the employee's standpoint.

Table 15 Informant Passages of Service Loyalty

Behavioural Outcome	Informant Passages
Service loyalty	<p>Example 2</p> <p>Grace – There's a sizeable social part to my shopping experience, people would spend time to talk to you and get to know you... I shopped with her (a sales lady) constantly over the years, without using anyone else. She was always interested in who I am, what I do. Yes, I tend to be loyal to the people in the store if I can have a decent conversation with them.</p>

	<p>Example 3</p> <p>Linda – There are customers, who come back and ask for me specifically, I think that you should build up a good rapport with them and be interested in their personal lives.</p>
--	--

It can be seen from examples 2 and 3 that the interactive conversations pertaining to the customers' personal lives were the key to constructing positive and personalised service experiences for them. For instance, as a consumer, Grace highly valued the recognition of individuality through consumption since she pointed out that the sales assistant was always interested in "*who I am, what I do*". In the case of Linda, as discussed in the "findings – part 1" section, her customers often initiated conversations with her regarding their children, and tragic events that had happened to her Jewish customers.

The fact that the sales personnel had dedicated time to listen to their customers about their lives and needs as well as to being passionate about sharing their side of personal narratives had strengthened the customer relationship and enhanced consumer loyalty. For example, customer Grace mentioned that she had been loyal to the same sales person for many years and not "*using anyone else*", Linda emphasised that her customers would come back for her "*specifically*" since she showed she was "*interested in their personal lives*".

4.8.2.5 Positive Word-of-Mouth

Positive word-of-mouth (WOM) has been found to be the third element that contributes to the formation of the behavioural outcome. The following passages (Table 16) from the customers' side of interviewing are used as examples to illustrate how life storytelling and swapping can affect vocal behaviours.

Table 16 Informant Passages of Word-of-Mouth

Behavioural Outcome:	Informant Passages
Word-of-Mouth	<p>Example 1</p> <p>Rachel – [story swapping of the femininity story, page 120]...I actually sent friends out there and they said they could not believe how fabulous they (sales personnel) were. They couldn't believe how good their service was and the good conversations they had.</p> <p>Example 2</p> <p>Isabella – [story swapping of the femininity story, page 151]...I received many compliments on how beautiful I was dressed when I was in the party... I recommended the shop to a couple of friends, I also told them what her (the sales consultant) name was and what she looked like.</p> <p>Example 3</p> <p>Vanessa – [story swapping of the feminist story, page 125]...I always told my girlfriends about her (the female owner of the hardware store). I told them how good her service was, how comfortable you would feel in a hardware store.</p>

As discussed earlier, after Rachel had exchanged her femininity story with the sales lady in the shop on how to groom and get dressed up this made her happy. Apart from being very satisfied with the service experience and being loyal to the sales person in

the store, the data reveal that she spread positive WOM comments about her pleasant retail experience and enjoyable personal conversation to her friends. The passage from informant Isabella also indicates that after co-creating the female image and femininity values with the female employee, she “*recommended*” the clothes store and the sales lady to some of her friends. Furthermore, both Vanessa and the female owner of the hardware store entertained feminist values and beliefs, and also they deployed their personal stories and life experiences to portray the ideology of equality between men and women, as well as narrating their dissatisfaction with some sexist issues. The established relationship through the swapping of the feminist story enhanced the customer’s loyalty and consequently drove her to pass on the information to her friends about having a good service experience.

4.9 Each Type of Life Story has a Distinctive Outcome

As discussed earlier, the customer as the beneficiary, and the building and maintaining the customer relationship are identified as the two general outcomes from the vocal performance of storytelling and story swapping between the two actors in the retail stores. However, the two sets of interviews suggest that each type of personal story (i.e. the family story, tragedy story, gendered story, and community story) not only shares the general outcomes, but also has a distinctive one, unique to the type. As illustrated in Figure 7, the swapping of the family story can facilitate the consumer to preserve the family history and infuse the family pride. The tragedy story is associated with pain healing and moral support. The gendered story may lead to the

construction of the gendered roles and images. Finally, the community story narration assists the connections among community members in the real life.

4.9.1 The Family Story

The consumer-to-employee interaction that is mainly constructed by the family aspect of the storytelling and swapping could embrace special meanings regarding family values and beliefs into the product as well as the customer's retail experience. That is, it could provide consumers a novel way to preserve an important family event or memory, and also it could assist them in infusing personal and family pride. Two examples that are summarised in Table 17 are offered in order to demonstrate that the swapping of the family story between the consumer and in-store staff provided a platform for these individuals vocally to express their pride about their family relations as well as to preserve memories about family events.

Table 17 Informant Passages of the Family Story Associated Distinctive Outcome

Distinctive Outcome	Informant Passages
The family story	<p>Example 1</p> <p>Sophie – I went to a jewellery store last week. I have been there several times and the same lady served me ... I told her “I’m looking for a birthday present for my daughter, something special, you know, she’s turning 18 next week, this is the first time she’s leaving home, she’s a university student now, I am so proud of her...</p>

	<p>Example 2</p> <p>Amy – Social interaction is very important. If the person is not interested in why I need it, who I buy it for, I'll leave straight away. I'll go to another store, I'll get it from someone who can serve me properly...you know that I mean ... I always talk about my children (with the sales assistants). I want people to know that I have three beautiful children and they are all doing very well in school.</p>
--	---

Sophie stressed that her daughter was going to university and she was turning eighteen, thereby becoming a proper adult. That is, it can be interpreted from the quote that the customer revealed her identity as a mother during the conversation, and she aimed to spread important family news with the sales person that her daughter was going to university, and she was proud of her child for this achievement. Meanwhile, according to Amy's passage, she emphasised that social interaction was essential to construct her shopping experience, and she was determined to utilise consumption to express her affections towards her children. In addition, she wanted the sales personnel to assist her to witness and preserve memories about the important moments in her children's growth period.

4.9.2 The Tragedy Story

Under the section "findings part 1, four themes of the life story and the associated sociocultural resources of the consumer", four examples were given illustrating that some consumers and sales personnel would share and exchange personal information regarding a loss of a family member, a fatal disease, or a traumatic life experience. This type of vocal performance shows that these individuals utilised shopping as a

medium to grieve and memorialise the tragic event at a social and moral level so as to co-construct the meaning and value of life. In particular, the main purpose of the consumer who initiates a conversation about a tragic life event is the quest for sympathy, moral support, and some possible answers to solve the problem.

According to the interview data, the exchange of one's tragic life event could benefit the customer to receive intangible help or a solution in dealing with a daunting life issue. A passage from Tom below indicates that the human interaction and story swapping could help in healing pain, and recapturing the meaning of life.

Tom – A gentleman came in, he said to me “oh my wife died last year”... I said “I am truly sorry for your loss [story swapping of the tragedy story, page 112]...And then his daughter came over, his daughter is about 40, she started telling me about the mother that died. It was all very sad...And then in the end, I said “oh my god, I am so sorry, I can't tell you how sad I am and stuff”. She then gave me a hug. And said “oh you are so nice, thank you for being so helpful, thank you for listening to this stuff”. And then she said to my manager that I was very helpful.

As discussed earlier in the tragedy story section, Tom spent time listening to his customer's life problem about losing his wife. He could relate to his customer, and also he could interpret that the gentleman was searching for moral support. Consequently, he narrated his own personal experience about how he dealt with his grandma's death in order to give sympathy and empathy to the gentleman as well as to help him to heal the pain. When the conversation came to an end, the customer's daughter came over to show how much they appreciated Tom's help, and how happy

they were with him in collectively helping the gentleman as well as the family to heal the pain and rediscover the concept of self, and the purpose of life, as she emphasised in “*thank you for being so helpful, thank you for listening to this stuff*”. Additionally, the behavioural response that the gentleman’s daughter gave positive feedback to the store manager further suggests that the customers had received what they expected from the service, and that they were the beneficiaries from the interaction.

4.9.3 The Gendered Story

This study has elicited that the narration of the gendered story can assist the consumer in creating gender roles and gender stereotypes of identity and image, and also it could facilitate customers finding meaningful products. The examples below from the customer Isabella and sales person George support the finding that the creation of gender roles is one of the major outcomes that is co-constructed through the exchange of the gendered story.

Table 18 Informant Passages of the Gendered Story Associated Distinctive Outcome

Distinctive Outcome	Informant Passages
The Gendered story	<p>Example 1</p> <p>Isabella – I went to his clothes shop, I only wanted to buy a skirt, but I ended up buying the whole outfit. I was asking a girl (sales assistant) for some advice because she dressed really nice...[story swapping of the femininity story, page 151]</p>

	<p>Example 2</p> <p>George – We both have a passion for quality. That kind of similarity leads to a story on how I love to drive around in my dad’s Mercedes...[story swapping of the gendered story, page 131]</p>
--	---

The quotes from Isabella and George above appeared in the sections on the femininity story and masculinity story separately. It can be understood from these two passages that when the customers visited the stores, they tended to be task-oriented. For Isabella, she was looking for a skirt, and in the case of the male customer that George served, he was looking for a coffee machine of good quality. However, there were deep meanings associated with their consumption behaviours. For example, Isabella told the sales lady a story in order to express her femininity-oriented beliefs and her desire to achieve the ideal appearance as a female. Meanwhile, the sales person George communicated with his male customer through their “car stories” in order to portray the gender stereotypes of the belief that men are passionate about cars, machinery, and how things work.

4.9.4 The Community Story

The fourth theme of the swapped life narrative is the community story. This research has revealed that consumer-to-sales person interaction facilitates a face-to-face sociolinguistic will to connect among online brand/non-brand community members, tribers, or local community residents in real-life. That is, the swapping of the community story in retail stores assists the group members (i.e. the consumer and the

sales person) to connect to each other in a physical location (i.e. the retail store) to interact, communicate, and to learn together. People gathering together in real life is of considerable importance for knowledge in practice and value-in-use, for this can lead to information being communicated: better, more quickly, and more efficiently (Gabriel, 2008). The passage below that is selected from Kim's interview provides an example explaining how story swapping about individuals belonging to communities can lead to connection among members.

Kim – I was serving a customer in the coffee room. I was trying to make conversation with her and I found out that she's a big fan of Instagram. She told me how much she's obsessed with using Instagram, editing her photos, and posting them on Facebook. I was like "me too, I always take pictures of myself, my friends, or the places I've been to. It's fascinating to see people's comments and how many people like your pictures". I also told her "do you know we are going to launch a limited edition coffee on Instagram, you just need to post some photos and then you can win a holiday". She went "oh really, that's superb. I love Nespresso and I love Instagram, I'll definitely check that out later".

Kim, who was in her early 20s, was a sales assistant working at the Nespresso store in Manchester. She told me about one of her conversations with a consumer in the store being built around the usage of Instagram and the Nespresso "brand page" on Instagram. According to the passage above, Kim mentioned how when she was serving a customer in the coffee room inside of the Nespresso store and she tried to initiate conversation with her. She shared that the lady communicated with her through the shared identity of being users and fans of the social networking service – Instagram, and their conversation content was constructed around the same passion, interests, and beliefs of using Instagram and Facebook. In this case, the swapping of personal experience about engaging with online social media provided an effective

tool for online community members to reconnect with each other, and thus to interpret collectively network-oriented meanings, subcultures, and ideologies, face-to-face.

4.10 Summary of Findings Part 2

As stated in the introduction chapter, one of the research objectives of this thesis was to investigate various outcomes that are associated with the personalised and unique perspectives of the retail experience. Findings Part 2 suggests that the vocal interaction of story swapping between the consumers and sales personnel in a retail store generates two types of general outcomes: the customer is the beneficiary and the potential for building relationships and maintaining these in the long term. The first type tends to develop a consumer focus regarding what the customers obtain from the interactive conversations, whereas the second places more emphasis on the company's side of gaining.

The first type of the general outcome (i.e. customer is the beneficiary) comprises three different elements in varying combinations: the creation of individuality, the receiving of help or a solution to a life issue and obtaining companionship and employee intimacy. In general, this multifaceted outcome concurs with one the foundational premises of Service-Dominant Logic, for as Vargo and Lusch (2008) stress “*value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary (i.e. customer)*” (p. 7).

The second type of the general outcome is constructed by perceptual and behavioural sub-outcomes. The perceptual sub-outcome includes two elements, which are: 1) change or keep the consumer's perceptions about the brand and/or the store; and 2) build trust and credibility. Meanwhile, the behavioural sub-outcome covers the customers' actions, including: 1) creating a new cycle of story swapping and a co-creation process when the customer returns to the store; 2) service loyalty; and 3) positive WOM.

Furthermore, apart from the general outcomes as a result of the vocal interaction, the data reveal that each type of personal story not only shares the general outcomes, but also has its own distinctive one, which is unique to the type of narrative. Regarding this, it has been found that swapping of the family story can facilitate the consumer preserving family history and infusing family pride. The tragedy story is associated with pain reducing, healing and moral support, whereas the gendered story could lead to the construction of gendered roles and images. Finally, the community story narration assists the connections among community members in real life.

Findings Part 3

The Storytelling and Swapping Facilitate the Process of Value-in-Use

4.11 Introduction

The fourth research question of this thesis is: “What is the process of value-in-use during the consumer-to-employee interaction in the retail store”? According to the interviews, the value-in-use process is constructed by two phases, which are the storytelling phase, and the role switching and story swapping phase. However, before these stages, it requires a pre-story phase to facilitate value-in-exchange as well as a foundation for future resources deployment and integration (Figure 8).

This section contains two subsections. 4.12 relates to Figure 8 and explains the essential function of the pre-story phase in facilitating value-in-exchange between the consumer and the sales person. Subsection 4.13 links Figures 8 and 9 to explain how the storytelling phase, and role switching as well as the story swapping phase facilitate value-in-use through the consumer-to-employee vocal interaction (Figure 8). In addition, it will explore the detailed information of roles taken and resources collaboration of the consumer and the sales person during these two phases (Figure 9).

Figure 8 The Consumer's Meaning Co-creating and Problem Solving Process

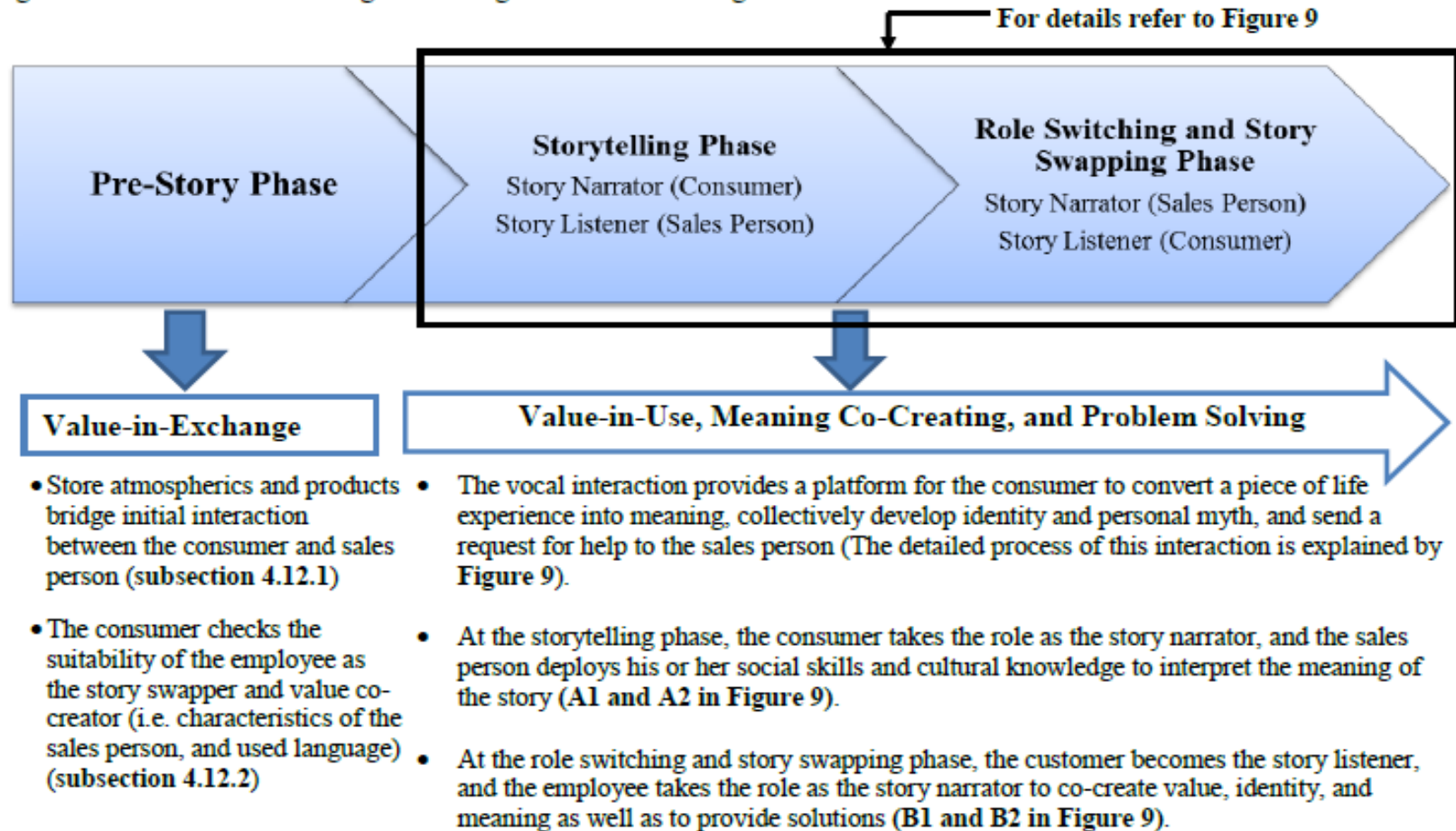
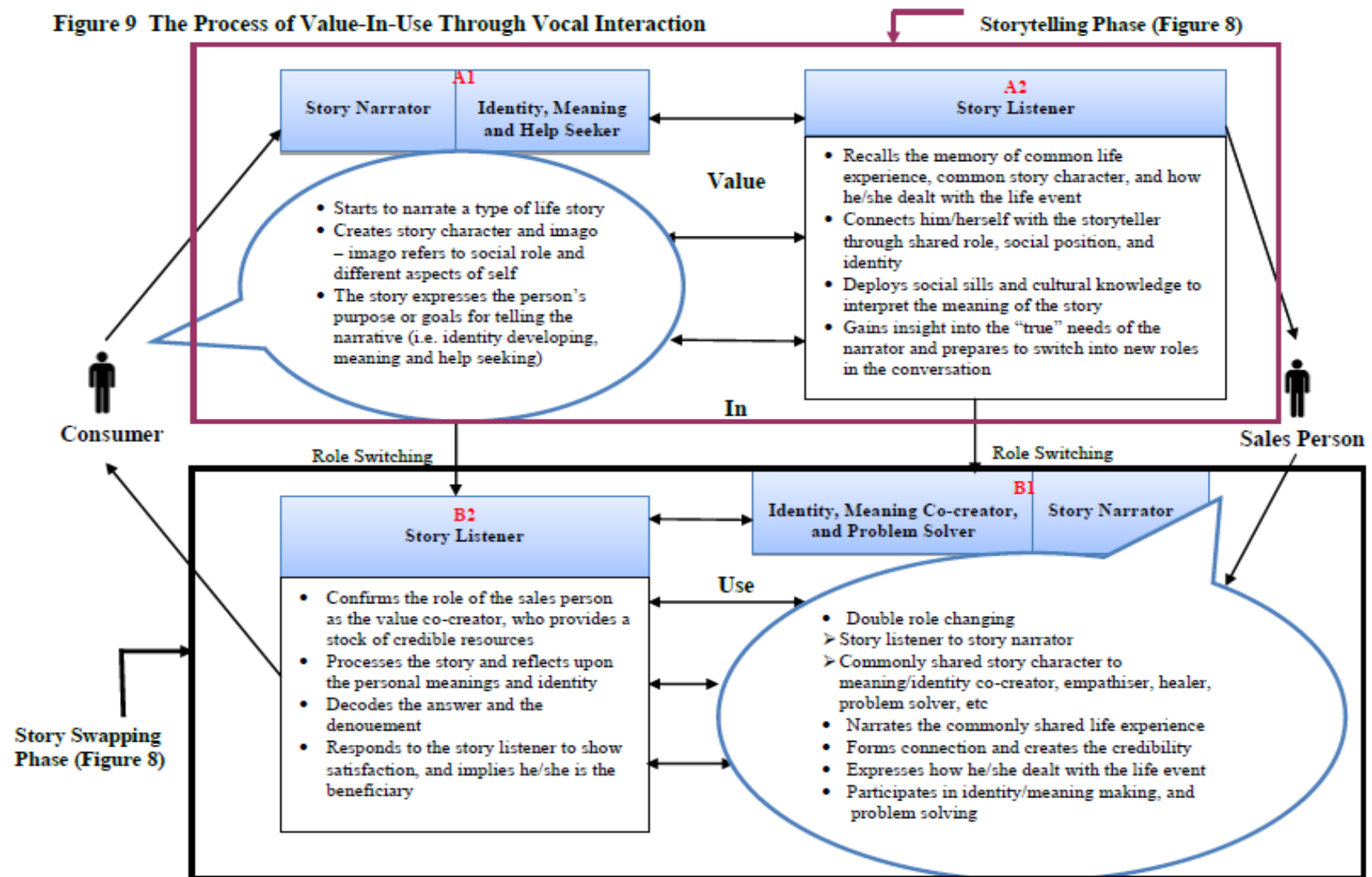


Figure 9 The Process of Value-In-Use Through Vocal Interaction



4.12 Pre-story Phase and Value-in-Exchange

The pre-story phase, which is illustrated in figure 8, has emerged as being an essential stage in warming up the relations between the customers and sales personnel in the retail stores. That is, it provides a foundation for the deployment and exchange of personal life narratives. Two major criteria construct this stage: first, store atmospherics and products bridge the initial interaction between the consumers and sales people (section 4.12.1) and second, the characteristics of the sales personnel, including gender, appearance, age, and the language they use allow the consumers to check the suitability of the staff to take on the role as storytelling and swapping partners as well as value co-creators (section 4.12.2). This stage is considered as the value-in-exchange phase since the interactive behaviours between the consumers and in-store staff are restricted to greeting each other, and giving and receiving product information.

4.12.1 Store Atmospherics Bridge Initial Interaction

According to the two sets of interview data, information given by both the consumers and employees indicates that the physical store settings and inquiry regarding product information functioned as a platform for evoking initial inter-personal interactions, shortening the distance between strangers, and opening up for further personal information giving. The following example illustrates this finding from the consumer point of view.

Example 1

During the interview with Linda, she gave some information about her whole conversations, and experiences of serving the customers, but I also asked her if she had any examples of her being a consumer and conducting interactive conversations with the sales person in the shop. The passage below shows how the in-store merchandising bridged the personal conversation between Linda and the sales lady.

Linda - I went to a shop in the Northern quarter the other day, I've seen a dummy in the shop. It was a really nice outfit and I really liked it. I said to the girl "I really like the outfit here, did you put that together"? She said "oh yeah, I put that on there". I said "every time I come in, all on the mannequins are really nice, it always make me want to buy them". She said "oh thank you" I gave her compliments about it because I think she deserved it. She can style clothes very well, makes me want to buy them. So now every time I go in, she remembers me, we say hello. Sometimes I say "oh I love your skirt". She will say "oh it's from blah blah blah, wherever". I actually ask her for her advice. "What do you think? I am going somewhere"? Like what I usually to do with people (a personal shopper at Topshop), she's got that good sense of style as well. She would give me help.

The information above indicates that the visual merchandising and mannequins functioned as a medium to break the boundaries between the two strangers. Initially, Linda was visually interacting with the store interior design since she became attracted to the in-store merchandising. This interaction between the consumer and physical in-store surroundings increased her willingness vocally to communicate and compliment the staff member who dressed the mannequins. As Linda mentioned in the interview, she was a personal shopper in Topshop for five years before she started to work for Nespresso and the well presented mannequins evoked her memory and

personal experiences of dressing people up and designing the in-store merchandising at Topshop. As a result, she probably felt connected with the sales person as they appeared to share similar work experiences and aesthetic values. In this case, Linda initiated the conversation, whilst the sales person participated into the dialogical process of listening and exchanging personal stories with her.

Examples 2 – 3

Two more examples contribute to the finding that initial interaction can be stimulated by store atmospherics and products, with these informants' passages coming from the sales personnel perspective. A summary of these is provided in Table 19.

Table 19 Informant Passages of the Pre-Story Phase – Store Atmospherics

Pre-Story Phase	Informants' Passages
Bridging initial interaction through store atmospherics and products	<p>Example 2</p> <p>Jade – It's definitely the coffee bar, people tend to be more open about themselves. If I start a conversation with a customer, another customer will get involved, and then another customer will get involved.</p> <p>Example 3</p> <p>George – Somebody looks at the machines, you will engage with them if they want to buy a machine or not. That's where the conversation grows from. The personal level of conversation is much greater in that type of area... I have a customer coming in, we are talking about particular things on the shop floor. We both have a passion for quality. That kind of similarity leads to a story on how I love to drive around in my dad's Mercedes... [the exchange of the masculinity story page 131]</p>

The second and third examples reveal that the physical store surroundings, such as the in-store coffee bar and open plan product display area, can be utilised as a platform to initiate personal conversations. According to Jade's passage, when people were tasting coffee at the bar, they tended to conduct conversations with the staff as well as with other customers. In addition, she highlighted that customers were likely to be "*open about themselves*" when they were immersed in the conversations. This information suggests that having a coffee in the store would put the customers at ease and thus to invite them to activate a more personal level of information and sociocultural resources.

Meanwhile, George emphasised that his customers tended to develop a personal level of conversation when they were in the product display area. Example 3 shows how he, as the sales person, was initially explaining the function of the coffee machine to one gentleman, and then the conversation started to develop towards to a more personal level of interest about cars. This switch of conversation topic was illustrated when George used his "Mercedes Benz" story as a metaphor to match the quality of the coffee machine and as the conversation grew, the swapping of personal narratives facilitated the co-creation of the masculine perspective of gender identity, image, and meaning.

4.12.2 The Consumer Checks the Suitability of the Sales Personnel as the Story Swapper and Value Co-creator

Since the co-creation process is built based on human interaction, the characteristics (i.e. gender, age, and appearance), and the used greeting language of the sales personnel would appear to be crucial at the pre-story stage. First of all, it can break the ice between the consumer and the sales person, warm up the relationship, hence leading to trust. Second, it allows the consumer to check the suitability of the employee to take the role as the story narrating partner as well as value co-creator, identity co-constructor, and problem solver.

- **Check the Characteristics of the Sales Personnel**

When individuals visit stores, the initial consumer-to-employee contact is most often visual. In this case, the characteristics of staff in the retail stores, including their gender, age, and appearance play important roles in stimulating the customers to conduct conversation.

Example 1

Rachel – They (the sales person) must be females. It's like with make up. How can you possibly know how a foundation feels or looks on a skin because you have never actually worn it and I think it's the same with clothes. I like to actually get people's opinion and say "how did you find that fabric on, did it crease. I travel a lot, would it go okay in a suitcase. Will I need to have it dry cleaned or can I hand wash it"? Like all those sort of things, with them all geared to a girl.

It appears from the data that gender is an important element linking the consumers and sales people. As explained in the section of the gendered story, the gender role aspect of life storytelling and exchanging would often occur when the customers interacted with same gendered sales people. According to customer Rachel, she liked to interact with a female sales person when she was shopping for feminine-oriented products, such as make up and clothing. This was because, as she alluded, as gender stereotypes women tend to have more knowledge and experience regarding wearing cosmetics and dressing up than men. By interacting with a woman, she could consult the product information as well as integrate the femininity perspectives of values and consumption experience.

Examples 2 – 3

Apart from the gender scenario, age and appearance of the sale assistants are also considered as important factors in encouraging the customer's desire to check if the sales personnel are suitable for being conversation partners, problem solvers, and value co-creators. The passages from customers Charlotte and Jessica that are listed in Table 20 demonstrate this finding.

Table 20 Informant Passages of the Pre-Story Phase – Characteristics of the Sales Personnel

Pre-Story Phase	Informants' Passages
<p>Characteristics of the sales personnel – age and appearance</p>	<p>Example 2</p> <p>Charlotte – I went to a bridal shop to buy a wedding dress. I picked this lady, she's an elderly lady ... She made me feel so special, I felt like she was my mum helping me to get ready for the day. We chatted a lot...[the exchange of the family story, page 105]</p> <p>Example 3</p> <p>Jessica – Okay, if the shop assistants all wear the clothes from that shop and they always look really good and I look at them a lot of the time and say show me that top or that skirt or whatever. I'll probably ask them for advice if I'm going out for a special occasion.</p>

As discussed earlier in the section on the family story, customer Charlotte co-created family values with the sales person in the bridal store. This passage refers to the initial stage of the interaction and why the age of the sales person was essential in the story swapping behaviour. That is, when Charlotte visited the store, the age of the sales lady attracted her attention, and consequently she “*picked*” this “*elderly*” lady to serve her. This age preference suggests that Charlotte was searching for a particular person to co-create her own retail experience. More precisely, the age of the sales lady associated with a “mum” image, and it subsequently evoked Charlotte’s desire to deploy her family-related stories and values. Moreover, in terms of the appearance of the sales personnel, example 3 suggests the way the staff were dressed sent messages to the female customer that as same gendered sales personnel, they might have rich

stocks of femininity and grooming values, and also they might be experienced and practised in creating and maintaining their appearances. Under these circumstances, Jessica would begin the vocal interaction by providing the sales person with her personal information on what special occasion she was going to, and what kind of look or advice she needed.

- **Check the Used Language**

The language used by the staff has also been identified as one of the crucial elements in relaxing the customers, as it provides them with insights as to whether the sales representatives are enthusiastic and friendly enough to engage in conversation. It can be seen from the information provided below that the general greeting made by the sales assistant provided a chance for customers to speak up about their daily lives and events.

Example 1

Jade - I normally say “how are you? How’s your shopping today”? Some people just give simple answers, but for others, they give detailed information, like “oh I’m shopping for a friend, they want this and they want that”. You get all sorts of conversations, like how someone’s days been, how they like coffee. Someone talked about they has just been a holiday. We are quite open, we like to talk about things as well. When someone initiates a conversation, we always react to them, when they are talking, you kind of read your customers and see where it’s going. If someone talks about he’s just been on a holiday, you would say oh where have you been on your holiday? You know, keep the conversation going.

It is apparent from Jade's interview, that as the service provider she always greeted her customers and engaged with them in "chit-chat". For example, she said "*How are you*"? "*How's your shopping today*"? "*Where have you been on your holiday*"? and so forth. The greeting language and initial interactions could make the customers feel that the sales person cared about them, and was interested in knowing about them as human beings rather than someone who just handed over money. For Jade, this meant deploying her social, cultural and personal knowledge and competencies, if she was to move the conversation along. Moreover, from the passage above it can be seen that when she initiated conversations, some people just gave simple answers, whereas others gave much more detailed information, like "*oh I'm shopping for a friend, they want this and they want that*".

Examples 2 – 3

The passages from Nespresso staff Tom and customer Sophie also suggest that the use of language is important in the pre-story phase as it allows the customers to check the suitability and enthusiasm of the audience (i.e. the sales personnel) regarding whether they are interested in being involved in their lives and willing to give information about their own.

Table 21 Informant Passages of the Pre-Story Phase – The Used Language of the Sales Personnel

Pre-Story Phase	Informants' Passages
The used language of the sales personnel	<p>Example 2</p> <p>Tom – A gentleman came in... he said to me “oh my wife died last year, Nespresso makes me so happy, I love coffee, I don’t like to sleep too much because when I lie down, I think about her”. It’s an awful thing. So I said to him, “that’s terrible, I am so sorry”... [the exchange of the tragedy story, page 112]</p> <p>Example 3</p> <p>Sophie – I went to a jewellery store last week. I have been in there several times and the same lady served me. She saw me come in and said, “hello”. She didn’t remember my name, but that’s all right, I didn’t give it to her but she said “hello” to me and said “what are you looking for this time”? So she’s come up and given me, not preferential treatment, but she has served me pretty quickly... [the exchange of the family story, page 107]</p>

In the section on the tragedy story, it was elicited that Tom connected with his customer through the narration of the death of their beloved ones. Example 2 shows how the vocal language used by the sales person helped facilitate story swapping behaviour. That is, when the gentleman told Tom that his wife had passed away, Tom immediately reacted with “*that’s terrible, I am so sorry*”. This vocal behaviour was filled with empathy and sympathy, which sent a signal to the consumer that Tom could be a potential good story listener and that he might help him with his difficulties. Meanwhile, according to Sophie’s interview (example 3), when she entered the store, the sales lady remembered her, and greeted her by saying “*hello, what are you looking*

for this time". The vocal behaviour was not only considered as a simple greeting, but also added a personal touch since the sales person had acknowledged that Sophie was a regular customer. In this case, greeting and basic vocal interaction stimulated the customer's willingness to perform, and thus to share her life narratives.

4.13 Storytelling and Swapping Phases and Resource in Integration

It can be seen from Figure 8, the pre-story phase provides a foundation for value-in-exchange between the in-store consumers and employees. After breaking the ice, and developing initial interactions, there then comes the storytelling and role switching and story swapping phase. These two stages are the representation of the value-in-use process through the vocal interaction, in which the customers and sales personnel take and switch roles to deploy social skills and cultural knowledge collectively in order to convert past or present life experiences into: meanings, personal myth, identity, and solutions. Complementing Figure 8, Figure 9 shows detailed information regarding the roles, deployed personal competencies, and interactive activities of the consumers and employees during these two stages.

4.13.1 The Storytelling Phase

With respect to the storytelling phase, the detailed roles of the sales person and the employee, and their deployed social and cultural operant resources are shown in the process comprising A1 and A2 in Figure 9. Figure 9 is designed based on the reasons why the consumers first take on the roles as the story narrators. The rationale for this design is: First, the data from the two sets of interviews suggest that the consumers

nearly always prefer to be the primary performers for initiating and directing the conversation regarding their personal lives. Secondly, as explained in chapter one, a key aim of the research was to provide evidence for a consumer-centric point of view that the customers are the key value co-creators, who actively invite the retailer-provided resources into their designed value creation process, rather than the other way around.

It is demonstrated in Figure 9 that when the consumer takes the role as the story narrator (A1), and the sales person plays the role as the story listener (A2), the latter is tasked with deploying his or her social skills and cultural knowledge to interpret the meaning of the story. Three examples are integrated in this section to explain the value-in-use process in the storytelling stage, which come from the interviews with customers Rachel, Sophie, and Nespresso employee Liam. The passages that are used in this subsection are the storytelling parts of consumer-to-employee conversations in a retail store, whilst the story swapping parts are covered in the next section (i.e. 4.13.2 the role switching and story swapping phase).

4.13.1.1 The Consumer as the Story Narrator, and Identity and Help Seeker (A1, Figure 9)

It can be seen from Figure 9 that the consumer initiates the conversation with the in-store employee by narrating a piece of life event or personal experience. The life event or personal experience could be relating to a family narrative, tragedy story, gendered story, and/or the story about one's community. The consumer narrated life

story can not only provide the audience (i.e. the sales person) rich information about what has happened/is happening/will happen in this person's life, but also reveals the purposes of the storyteller. That is, this person hopes the story listener can assist him or her to interpret the meaning of the life event, develop identity and personal myth, make sense of life, and find possible solutions for the personal problem. Therefore, there are two roles that are associated with the consumer when he or she narrates their life story. First, there is the person's role in the consumer-to-employee conversation as the story narrator. Second, when the consumer is narrating the personal life story, he or she tries to portray his/her role or story character as one of searching for meaning identity and/or help.

Moreover, when the consumer tells the staff member a piece of life narrative, the plots of the story could reflect the story character of the consumer, such as what social role he/she plays in the social structure. Is this person a mother or a daughter, a husband or a wife, a victim or a survivor, et cetera? In addition, the storyteller also creates imagos around the story. This refers to the concept of self and identity, and it is formed by social roles and different perspectives of the self. As McAdams (1993) describes "*an imago is a personified and idealized concept of self. Each of us consciously and unconsciously fashions main characters for our life stories.*" (p. 122). Additionally, the author also suggests that the imagos could be positive or negative, unique or common.

4.13.1.2 The Sales Person as the Story Listener (A2, Figure 9)

It is illustrated in A2, Figure 9, that when the consumer plays the role as the story narrator and portrays his/her story character as an identity and meaning maker as well as help seeker, the role of the sales person is the listener, whose position is to deploy social and cultural knowledge and skills to digest the information and process the story. An important condition under the value-in-use process is that the staff in the retail store should be able to share similar life experiences, values, beliefs, and ideologies with the consumer. The role of the sales person during the interactive conversation and the deployed resources are listed in the boxes in Figure 9. The consumer side of the life narrative could recall to the memory of the sales person that he/she has had the communal experience (i.e. communal life experience in this case means common life experience). The employee will then be able to relate to the consumer and visualise what has happened in his/her life event, how he or she dealt with the similar situation, and what character he/she played in the communal story. The shared role and social position through the communal life experience form the understanding and connection between the storyteller and story listener, and thus facilitate the employee to gain insights about the meaning and purpose of the story told by the customer.

Additionally, by listening to the story, the sales person may detect the “true” needs of the consumer from the shopping trip, such as whether the individual is searching for a meaning, pursuing the truth about life, developing an identity and/or seeking help to heal or grow. Importantly, since the shared life experience has formed a sense of connection and closeness between the sales person and the customer, it evokes the

former's willingness to share his/her side of the story with the story narrator, and increases the desire to help the customer with the problems or life issues. In other words, the story listener is ready to change into a new role and deploy his/her side of resources.

Example 1

Rachel's conversation with the female sales person in the clothing store is an example demonstrating the deployment of personal life experience, story character, and the social role of the female customer.

Rachel – We went to Hawaii and I went to this clothing store... I tried on bathers and I hate trying on bathers, I look terrible in them and I was paranoid and this girl, who had the figure, the best figure in the whole world, who was brilliant. She kept saying, you have got beautiful shape, you have got big hips, but this is how you cover it up, this is what you do. I actually told her, “this is the most exciting hour and a half of shopping I have ever had in my life. I hate shopping, I really do, because people always say I am a big girl and I hate the word big, because it makes me sound like I am overweight, which I am not, I am like 70 kilos and 183 cm tall”...

(A1 – Customer as the story narrator)

According to the passage above, after initial interactions (e.g. the sales lady helped Rachel to try bathers on, and commented on her body shape), Rachel started to take the role as the story narrator to give information about her previous shopping experiences and feelings towards them. The story character that Rachel tried to

portray was the identity and help seeker who hoped that the sales person would participate in the identity making and problem solving process to co-create the femininity aspects of the value and image with her. It can be understood from the interview that Rachel gave two pieces of life story to the sales person. Initially, she briefly mentioned that she hated wearing “*bathers*”, she believed she looked “*terrible*” in them, and she was “*paranoid*” about that. This slice of information indicated that the customer was not confident about her body and personal image since she used strong words to express her feelings about her appearance. In this case, the story character that she aimed to portray was a young female individual, who had the desire to achieve the female gender role-related image and identity.

In addition, Rachel highlighted another event of her life in order to make sure that the sales lady was able to understand her story character and the imagos she was trying to create. She mentioned that she “*hated*” shopping since she was tall and people always used “*big*” to describe her, which further revealed how much she was negatively affected by her height. She hoped to counter this, by feeding her desire to develop and construct a feminine image by receiving help in terms of the right product from someone whose opinion she trusted, thereby enhancing her female identity.

(A2 – Sales person as the story listener)

While Rachel was narrating her side of the story, the member of staff took the role as the story listener, listening attentively, whilst at the same time searching her memory to see if she had experienced similar life events. Importantly, the process of resource

integration requires that both the consumer and sales assistant share common life experiences, values, and beliefs. If the sales lady had experienced something similar to Rachel, the communal experiences, knowledge, and personal resources from the past life events would allow the shop assistant to digest her narrative, interpret the meaning, and gain insights about what she really wanted from the service.

Examples 2 – 3

Along with customer Rachel's passage, two more examples (i.e. one is from the consumer's perspective, and the other one is from the sales person point of view) are provided in order to demonstrate the findings of the storytelling phase. That is, first, how the customers take the role as story narrators to express their life experiences in the form of oral stories in order to search for resource integration. Second, how the sales personnel play the role as the story listeners in the human interaction aiming to gain understanding about the meaning of the narrative.

Table 22 Informant Passages of the Storytelling Phase

Storytelling Phase	Informants' Passages
<p>The consumer as the story narrator, identity and help seeker, and the sales person as the story listener</p>	<p>Example 2</p> <p>Sophie – I went to a jewellery store last week...I said, “I would like to buy an engagement ring”, she said, “oh you’ve got one on”. And I said, “yes, but it’s not my real one, I told her the story that when I got married, actually not long after we got married, I went to the beach and it fell off into the ocean, never to be seen again So I have always used this old one that, from the family thing, I have always wanted to buy myself an engagement ring, like a nice one”. And she goes on, “the discount at the moment is wonderful, I will show you a few and see what you think”. She didn’t push me, but it was just this lovely lady, very attentive and she actually commented on my necklaces and she said, “I love your lucky charms, you’ve got the India for good luck and you have got the Seven Rings of luck”. I said, “yes, and they were bought by my family, my children bought them for me, both”. And I told her “I’m also looking for a birthday present for my daughter, something special, you know, she’s turning 18 next week, this is the first time she’s leaving home, she’s a university student now, I am so proud of her, but I really miss her”...</p> <p>Example 3</p> <p>Liam – I remember once, because the woman was very upset, and I had to stop the conversation, taking her to the back, and let her sit down, gave her a drink of water. She came in, she was like “Hi, I just need to get some coffee, because I’ve never purchased coffee before”. I was like “sure, no problem, have you just got the machine”? “oh yeah, I’ve got the machine from my dad”. I was like “oh that’s very nice of him, has he got a new one?” “no no, unfortunately he died”. And then she said “I know I like this coffee because when my dad first got the machine, he had this coffee, I tried it and I really liked it as well”. And then, she’s got really upset because she was saying this used to be his favourite coffee. She said I want to buy that one...</p>

(A1 – Customer as the story narrator)

According to example 2, when Sophie entered the jewellery store, she started to take the role as the key performer by telling the sales person a story about the loss of her ring. In addition, she appeared determined to give more information regarding her daughter (e.g. her daughter's birthday, age, education background, and her emotions towards her). It can be interpreted that when the consumer played the role of story narrator in the conversation, she used the medium of storytelling to portray her identity as a wife, a family-oriented individual who cherished family values, commitment, and kinship. Moreover, the creation of the story character and plots suggest that she was inviting the sales person to participate into the value co-creation process of co-constructing family-related identity meaning with her. In addition, the story Sophie told were unpinned by the hope that the sales person could assist her in finding the right meaningful products for her daughter and herself.

Example 3, listed in Table 22, could also explain the resource-in-integration activities at the storytelling stage. However, in comparison with Rachel (example 1) and Sophie's (example 2) passages, Liam's quote helps the researcher to understand the value-in-use process through the lens of the sales personnel. The behaviour of the female customer taking the role as the story narrator, and implicitly giving the Nespresso sales person Liam a tragic story about her father suggested that the consumer aimed to portray that she was a victim, who was suffering from the loss of her beloved one. In addition, the story provided insights into the purpose of her shopping trip, which was to search for empathy and sympathy. Moreover, she

purchased the coffee that her dad used to like, which suggests that the customer was aiming to add special meanings to the products as well as her shopping trip.

(A2 – Sales person as the story listener)

As illustrated in Figure 9, when the consumer plays the role as the story narrator, the role of the sales person is the listener, who may deploy social and cultural knowledge and skills to digest the information and process the story. For instance, it can be interpreted from the second example that customer Sophie narrating a family story regarding her daughter would have brought to the listener's (i.e. the sales lady) mind whether she had children and if so, did she have personal experience of missing them. Were this the case, she could have shared communal experiences at a non-spoken level and because she would have understood the sentiments underpinning the tale she would have been able to forge a connection with the customer. In the case of Liam's example, he not only listened to the customer about what had happened in her life, but also detected the "true" needs of the consumer in her shopping trip in terms of searching for meanings, pursuing identity, and/or seeking help. In the meantime, if Liam entertained similar values and beliefs as his customer, he might be able to share his side of the tragic story with his customer and get ready to change his roles to story swapper and value co-creator.

4.13.2 The Role Switching and Story Swapping Phase

It is illustrated in Figure 8, after the storytelling phase, there comes the switching and story swapping one. The detailed roles of the sales person and the employee as well as

how they deploy and integrate social and cultural operant resources to construct, collectively, the retail experience for the consumer, are shown in “B1 and B2” in Figure 9.

During the role switching and story swapping phase, the customer becomes the story listener (B1), and the employee takes the role of the story narrator (B2) to co-create value, identity, and meaning as well as to provide solutions. This section contains three examples, which include customers Rachel, and Sophie as well as Nespresso employee Liam. These passages are in relation to three quotes from section “4.13.1 The storytelling phase”. More specifically, they are the follow on parts, which include the story swapping, from the above discussed quotes.

4.13.2.1 The Sales Person Changes the Roles to Story Narrator, and Value Co-creator and Problem Solver (B1, Figure 9)

There is a double role changing action going on after the service providers have listened to the consumers’ side of the life story. First of all, the sales consultants change their roles from the story listeners to story narrators during the in-store vocal conversation. Second, they change from communal story characters to identity and meaning co-creators as well as problem solvers. This change is because when the staff are listening to the customers’ narratives, they visualise and reflect on themselves being communal story characters. After interpreting the meanings and purposes of the narrated stories by the consumers as well as taking on the role as story narrators, the

employees aim to portray themselves as being empathisers, healers, family oriented, among the sisterhood, or mates.

The narration of the communal life experiences by the employees can not only form connection and trustworthy relationships with the customers, but also assists the former to gain credibility since the customers would acknowledge that the employees have experienced the same life events, share similar feelings, and have had experiences in dealing with the situations. Moreover, the sales assistants' life narratives provide rich stocks of social and cultural resources for the consumers to determine and build on who and what they are, and how to solve their personal issues.

4.13.2.2 The Consumer Changes the Roles as Story Listener and Beneficiary (B2, Figure 9)

When the sales representative plays the role as the story narrator, the consumer is transformed from narrator to listener. They will interpret the plots, and reflect upon the personal meanings from the same type of the life story that is told by the sales person. In the meantime, the customer will confirm whether or not the sales person can provide a stock of credible social and cultural aspects of operant resources to co-create with. And importantly, he or she not only searches for the construction of identity, meaning, and personal myth, but also for help and a solution. This help can be related to finding a product, or moral support, or a combination of both. Therefore, the customers can “decode” the answer from the sales person's side of the storytelling

and as a result respond to them in a way that demonstrates they have received what they have needed from the service, thus showing that they are satisfied with the shopping trip.

Example 1

As discussed in A1 and A2, Rachel took the role as story teller and identity seeker to narrate her feelings of trying on bathers and her experiences of people judging her being tall and not feminine. At the same time, the sales lady paid attention and listened. The following information shows that the roles of the consumer and staff member were changing, whereby the sales person became the story swapper and Rachel changed to the story listener.

Rachel – [Storytelling by the consumer, page 200]...She said to me “you are not overweight at all. You look beautiful. As you can see, I am not much shorter than you. I used to get ridiculous comments and stares when I go shopping. But they don’t bother me anymore because I’ve learnt I should be confident in my own skin”. I really admired her attitude, and I thoroughly enjoyed her service, what she did for me was so brilliant, I couldn’t thank her enough for it. I actually went down to the beach for the first time in ten years with a pair of bikinis and actually strutted myself along the beach because I felt fantastic and it was all because of her. Anyone else would never have got me there. I felt like and I love those bathers and they cost me a small fortune, but I tell you what, I don’t care, every time I wear them I think I look great. Because she sold me something to suit my body shape and that’s never happened before, I have never had anyone sell me bathers to suit my body shape in my life. The service was just brilliant.

(B1 – the sale person as the story narrator)

After listening to the customer's side of story, the sales lady began to change her roles as the story swapper as well as the meaning, values, and identity co-creator, and problem solver. She formed a connection and showed understanding by telling her customer that she had experienced similar life events before, because she was tall and got judged by people. In addition, when the sales lady was narrating her story, she acted as an ally and encourager, assisting Rachel to construct the feminine aspect of her identity and thus to gain confidence. First, she gave her opinion to reassure her that she was not overweight and that she was beautiful. Moreover, this verbal reaction probably revealed the sales person's aesthetic and cultural knowledge. Second, the sales assistant told her customer how she dealt with the situation when she received "*ridiculous comments*" regarding her height and appearance. In this case, she offered Rachel the solution that it did not matter how tall she was, as she still looked beautiful, feminine, and she should be proud of who she was and be "*confident in her own skin*".

(B2 – the consumer as the story listener)

While the female shop assistant was talking about her own story, Rachel was playing the role as the listener. At the same time, she was checking whether the lady had experienced similar situations and faced the same difficulties. In this case, the customer could confirm that the sales person had provided a stock of credible resources that were enriched with feminine values and female gender role identity that enabled her to determine and work on who she was, what the truth about "beauty" was, and how to gain confidence. It is thus interpreted that Rachel could take on board the meanings from the story told by the female sales assistant, and also that she was

able to “decode” the messages and answers to develop her femininity-related identity and beliefs as well as to gain confidence and feel beautiful. For just as she described, she “*went down to the beach for the first time in ten years with a pair of bikinis*” and she believed she “*looked great*”. That is, this story provides rich evidence to show that before the shopping trip Rachel was not so sure about her female image and did not have strong self-esteem. However, the human interaction and story swapping allowed her to exchange information verbally and interact values with the sales person and thus, convert her past experiences and problems into meaning, identity, and a solution.

In addition, it can be deduced that a pleasant retail experience had been established for Rachel through the swapping of personal narratives, given her comment that she “*thoroughly enjoyed her service*”. Furthermore, it was a memorable, unique, and personalised service experience for her since she emphasised that she felt the sales lady was the only person who had ever taught her how to look good, and also every time she wore the bathers, she probably associated this with the service that she had received from her.

Examples 2 – 3

As discussed earlier at the storytelling stage, customer Sophie gave personal information about her engagement ring and her daughter, and the Nespresso customer narrated about a tragic life event (i.e. her dad passing away) to the sales person Liam. The passages listed in Table 23 indicate that how the sales personnel transformed into

the story swappers, and what types of social skills and cultural knowledge they deployed in order to co-create positive and personalised service experiences.

Table 23 Informant Passages of the Story Swapping Phase

Story Swapping Phase	Informants' Passages
<p>The sales person as the story narrator, and the customer as the story listener</p>	<p>Example 2</p> <p>Sophie – [Storytelling by the consumer, page 203] ...She said “oh you must have a wonderful daughter! I have three children, they’ve all grown up and they have their own careers, families, and children. They are very very busy, I hardly see them. I miss them as well especially my grandchildren”. We were having a really nice, genuine conversation and even though she commented on what I was wearing. I thought that was really nice. I bought my daughter’s ring and it was because of her personal touch with me and where I was coming from and then she made me feel so good about buying it.</p> <p>Example 3</p> <p>Liam – [Storytelling by the consumer, page 203]...“Oh, I am so sorry, I’m terribly sorry”. So I apologised for it. But from my own life experience, when you have friends or family, when you know people who had people died, I don’t think that’s the only thing to do sometimes. I felt like I should listen to her, if anything she wanted to talk about, I should be there and listen. And also I told her a real life experience of my own to show I could relate to her. I said “I’ve lost my granddad last year, it was a terrible thing to cope with. My friends have given me an enormous amount of support”. So basically I tried to show more sympathy and gave her some support...when she left the store, she said I was being really helpful. If she needs more coffee, she will come back to me.</p>

(B1 – the sales person as the story narrator)

It can be seen in example 2 that the sales person switched her role to that of the story narrator. That is, she gave customer Sophie information about her family details by mentioning that she had “*three children, they have their own careers, families, and children*”. As suggested by the passage, she shared a similar role and identity in the family since she was a mother, and a grandmother. In this case, she could deploy her rich resources of family values and knowledge to interpret the meaning from Sophie’s story and thus narrate her own, which was embedded with common beliefs and mother-to-children bonding ideologies. Moreover, the sales lady lamented that she missed her children and grandchildren since they were busy with jobs and families. Consequently, the narration of the communal life experience not only formed connection and a trustworthy relationship between the consumer and the staff member, but also provided the former with a stock of rich social and cultural resources to determine the special meanings and hence construct value.

Example 3 provides an interpretation of the role switching and value co-creation phase from the sales person’s angle. After the lady told Liam about the death of her father, Liam told his customer a personal narrative about his granddad’s death, emphasising that it had been difficult for him to deal with the situation, and also that his friends had played important roles in helping him. This vocal information indicates that the sales assistant deployed his sociocultural resources to analysis the customer’s story as well as to create a connection and provide a remedy. More specifically, Liam had experienced a similar tragedy, that of the death of his grandfather and he was devastated by this. Therefore, he could connect with the lady

through the communal story character, and thus sensed that the customer was making a request for sympathy and moral support. In this case, the swapped life story told by Liam formed the connection between him and his consumer. Moreover, it added credibility to his role as the therapist, survivor, and meaning co-creator since he had knowledge and experience of dealing with the particular daunting life event.

(B2 – the consumer as the story listener)

The story swapping by the sales consultants assisted them in gaining credibility as the customers were able to confirm that the sales personnel had experienced similar life events and feelings. In the meantime, the consumers processed the story that was given by the shop assistants and then reflected upon the personal meaning and identity issues involved. As a result of the swapping behaviour, customer Sophie co-created family-related values, identity, and unique service experience, and also she found a meaningful product. She indicated that she was satisfied with the service, as witnessed by her having a “*genuine conversation*” with the lady in the shop and that the reason for making the purchase of the birthday present was due to the “*personal touch*” as well as her recognising “*where she was coming from*”.

In the case of Liam, his story about the loss of the beloved family member convinced the female customer that he could provide a reliable stock of social and cultural resources for her to determine and build upon the meaning of life, thus helping her to move on from the mournful personal event. More specifically, Liam emphasised that “*My friends have given me an enormous amount of support*”, which could be interpreted as a coded message that she could count on her family and friends to gain

strength and help. As a consequence of the vocal performance, the consumer confirmed that Liam was “*being really helpful*”, which suggested that she was the beneficiary, and she was happy that he engaged with her grief about the tragic event as well as to taking on the role of sympathiser and healer.

4.14 Summary of Findings Part 3

As stated earlier in the introduction chapter, one of the research objects was to discover the detailed value-in-use process regarding how resources are deployed and integrated during the consumer-to-employee interaction in the retail store. This study has found that the co-creation process happens based on two stages, which are the storytelling phase, and the role switching and story swapping one (Figure 8). More precisely, the detailed information of the roles taken and the resources collaboration of the consumer and the sales person during these two phases are demonstrated in Figure 9. Furthermore, the narration of one’s story does not happen straight away, for before the storytelling and swapping stages, a pre-story phase is required to facilitate value-in-exchange.

Figure 8 shows that the pre-story stage is considered as a necessary and essential phase for breaking the ice between the consumer and the sales representative, putting the consumer at ease, and forging initial interaction and conversation. Importantly, it provides a foundation for potential resource integration since it allows the consumer to examine whether or not the characteristics and quality (i.e. gender, appearance, age,

and the used language) of the sales assistant are suitable for their being a good story listener and value co-creator to interpret collectively the meaning, identity and personal myth out of a past, present, or future experience as well as to assist and help the individual to resolve problems and life issues.

The co-creation of the retail experience through storytelling and swapping between an individual and a sales person is established based on a process, which requires both to deploy social skills and cultural knowledge to transfer past or current life experience in the form of vocal language and then collectively convert this into meanings, personal myths, identity, and resolution in the retail stores. Figure 9 is designed to explain how resources are integrated through the vocal interaction between these two parities. In particular, it demonstrates how the role taking and switching can provide a medium for the deployment of resources and value-in-use.

At the storytelling stage, the consumer would take the position as the story narrator, and identity, meaning, and help seeker. He or she would initiate the conversation by narrating a piece about a life event or personal experience (i.e. the family story, tragedy story, gendered story, and/or community story). The consumer narrated life story could not only provide the sales person rich information about what had happened/is happening in this person's life, but also revealed that the storyteller hoped the story listener could assist him or her to interpret the meaning from the life event, develop identity and personal myth, make sense of life, and/or find possible solutions for a personal problem. While the customer was narrating his or her narrative, the

sales person would take the role as the story listener, whose position was to deploy social and cultural knowledge and skills to digest the information, process the story, and gain insights about the “true” needs of the consumer.

After the storytelling stage, it comes to the story swapping phase, for which the sales person would change his/her role from the story listener to story narrator. Meanwhile, this person would also transform themselves into identity and meaning co-creator as well as problem solver. The staff would deploy a piece of similar life experience to share with the customer after listening to their side of the life story. The sales person narrated life story could not only build connection with the customer, but also provide a stock of rich social and cultural resources for the consumer to determine and construct on who and what he/she was, what the meanings of the life events were, and how to solve a personal problem. When the sales representative played the role as the story narrator, the consumer would transform from the story narrator to the story listener. He or she would check and confirm if the employee had provided a stock of credible resources to co-create with. In the meantime, the consumer would utilise his or her knowledge and skills to reflect upon the personal meanings and “decode” the answer. As a result of the story swapping, the in-store shopper would respond to the employee to show satisfaction, which implies that this person is the beneficiary from the service.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Discussion

Much of the literature on retailing examines the construction of consumer retail experiences as an interaction between them and physical store settings. In the main, it has been determined that these firm-provided social and cultural resources can lead the retailer to achieve two major goals. First, it can deliver aesthetic and hedonic pleasure to shape spectacular or playful in-store experiences for customers (e.g. Kozinets et al., 2004; Verhoef et al., 2009). Second, it can promote the brand, build brand loyalty, create brand images, and deliver brand meanings and ideologies (e.g. Arnold et al., 2001; Borghini et al., 2009; Diamond et al., 2009; Hollenbeck et al., 2008). However, it is argued that the extant retail study tends to be firm-oriented since its research interests are limited to focusing on three criteria: 1) the retailer-provided resources, 2) the consumer-to-store ambience interaction, and 3) spectacular retail experience as well as the promotion of the brand.

Noting the limitations summarised above, in this thesis the aim was to develop a consumer-centric perspective to explore the human aspect (i.e. consumer-to-employee) of the interaction in co-creating the personalised and unique retail experience for the consumer. In order to do so, the following questions were put forward: 1) Through what way(s) do consumers co-create their retail experiences with the sales personnel in the retail stores? 2) What are the detail elements of the consumer's operant resources that individuals deploy during consumer-to-sales person interaction? 3) What is the process of the retail experience co-creation during consumer-to-sales

person interaction? 4) What are the outcomes that are caused by the consumer-to-sales person interaction?

After analysing the data, three key findings emerged that allowed for the questions above to be addressed. First of all, the vocal interaction, in particular the life storytelling and swapping between the consumer and employee, transforms the person into the key performer, who proactively deploys and integrates his/her operant resources that are enriched with everyday life practices. As such, this finding provides a response to the first and second research questions.

Second, this research has mapped out a detailed co-creation process on how value is integrated through the role playing and role switching process via the medium of the vocal narrative, for this facilitates individuals to convert their past or present life experiences into: meaning, identity, and solutions. Therefore, this second revelation addresses the third question.

Finally, it has been found that there are two types of the outcomes associated with the results of consumer-to-employee interaction. The first is the customer is the beneficiary, which means there should be a consumer focus when investigating what customers obtain from interactive conversations. The second reveals the retailers' side of gaining and customer relationship building.

Even though the story swapping perspective of the consumer behaviour is found in this thesis, it cannot possibly be generalised that every single customer who visits a retail store is keen to narrate and exchange his/her life stories with the sales assistant. It has been mentioned earlier in the Methodology Chapter, the ontological approach of this thesis is constructionist, whereby it promotes multiple, holistic, contextual, and socially constructed aspects of reality and/or human action (Hudson and Ozanne, 1998). Therefore, by following this philosophical thought, the consumer-to-sales person vocal interaction that has been discovered during this research can reveal one dimension of the reality. That is, the narration of the personal life story should start to be recognised as one type of the consumer behaviours alongside other forms of interactive activities in retail environments.

Under the circumstances that some of the customers are interested in opening up and narrating their personnel lives and experiences with sales personnel, story swapping could be integrated as one of the empathetic marketing strategies in constructing the consumers' shopping experiences. That is, retailers could leverage human resources as well as physical in-store settings to encourage this behaviour. However, the vocal interaction of storytelling might not happen on some occasions, such as with individuals who are not searching for social interactions, people who are task-oriented, those with a shortage of time while shopping, or those with language barriers.

5.1.1 Life Narrative and the Consumer's Stock of Operant Resources

The first part of the findings suggests that when consumers vocally interact with sales personnel, they nearly always communicate through certain types of the life narrative (i.e. the family story, the tragedy story, the gendered story, and/or community story) in order to portray their values, beliefs, and identities as well as to embrace special meanings in their shopping experiences. That is, according to the interview data, the co-creation process is based on interactive conversation, whereby on many occasions the consumers would bring up a piece of personal information or life issue to discuss with the sales assistants in the retail store, and another party would deploy their side of personal stories to co-construct the service experience.

The domain of the Service-Dominant Logic highlights that the consumers should be investigated as key active performers, who contain a rich stock of social and cultural operant resources for exchanging and collaborating with the firm to co-create and determine their experiences, values, beliefs, ideologies, and so forth (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Lusch et al., 2007; Payne et al., 2009; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008). In recent years, retail literature has shown growing interest in exploring the co-creative role of individuals in constructing value and experience since scholars have started to understand that they are resource holders as well as meaning and identity seekers (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

It can be argued that retailers are in the dominant position in value creation since the existing research interest is on the retailers' side of resource offering and the

construction of the individuals' retail experiences through the consumer-to-physical store settings is the major goal (e.g. Borghini et al., 2009; Gottdiener, 1995, 1998; Hollenbeck et al., 2008; Kozinets et al., 2002, 2004; Peñaloza, 1999; Sherry, 1998). However, customers are generally still studied as passive value receivers who immerse themselves in the firm-provided store environment, and manipulatively interpret brand meanings, images, and ideologies. Consequently, the details of the consumers' stock of rich competencies that they activate are largely unknown.

In this thesis in-depth investigation into the various types of the consumers' operant resources that individuals can activate and integrate when they visit a retail store has been undertaken. These personal, social, cultural, and ideological perspectives of competencies have been found in the form of the life narrative, which is communicated through the vocal performance/interaction between the consumer and in-store sales consultant. Some scholars (e.g. McAdams, 2008), when researching personal life narratives, have elicited that these take the form of self-portraits in which people tell various stories to sustain their identities as well as to reveal their self-beliefs, values, and normative practices that are constructed within a social and cultural context. Similarly, according to the interviews and observations of this study, when an individual visits a physical retail store and conducts a conversation with a sales person, he/she selects a certain type of story to tell and exchange in order to portray his/her values and beliefs, express identity and also seek to embrace meaning during the shopping experience.

It emerged that there are four types of life narratives that are commonly deployed and exchanged between the consumer and the sales person, which are the family, tragedy, gendered, and community stories. Moreover, it has been found that these four themes of the personal story are embedded with sociocultural operant resources, which are constructed in people's personal and everyday lives. Meanwhile, each type of the life narrative is associated with different dimensions of personal identity and value.

The family story has been found to contain family values, kinship, loving relations, and consumer rituals (e.g. weddings, birthdays and family rituals and traditions). During the story swapping process, the evoked identity of the consumer tends to be a member of the kinship relations (i.e. the parent, the child, or the partner) rather than himself/herself as a customer. Moreover, the family-related narrative is generally constructed around the consumer's family members, always expressing the positive sides of personal experience and life events, and the centre of the conversation invariably aims to address the characteristics and key issues of the family member.

The second type of life story is the tragedy story, which refers to a traumatic event that has happened or/is happening to an individual himself/herself or family members. That is, this theme of life narrative is associated with great suffering and pain and negative life events, such as a fatal disease or the loss of a family member. Even though this type of story can pertain to a family member, there are differences between it and a family story. First of all, the former focuses on a negative aspect of life experience, whereas the latter is about a positive life event. Secondly, the tragedy

story places emphasis on the traumatic event, whilst the family story aims to give information about the person (i.e. a family member). Moreover, during the vocal performance, consumers usually identify themselves as victims rather than consumers, and their retail experience is based on the re-creation and co-creation of human values of life through grieving about the tragic event.

The third type of the swapped life story is the gendered one and it portrays gender roles, identity, and image. This theme of the life narrative contains three types of sub-stories, which are the femininity, feminist, and masculinity narratives. The swapping of the gender-related story happens when the consumer is interacting with a same gendered sales person and the vocal performance of storytelling and exchanging can co-create gender-oriented values, ideology, image, and desired identity. That is, under the condition of female-to-female interaction, feminine and grooming values, the myth of “beauty”, and modern female identities are co-constructed during the service period. In addition, feminist values and an ideology of challenging and reversing the subordinate position of women are also co-created when a female consumer conducts an interactive conversation with a sales woman. In terms of male-to-male interaction, values and service experiences are generated through building conversations around the masculine side of personal interests, and creating a sense of fellowship and manhood.

The fourth theme of the personal story that the customer and sales assistant can become engaged in is the community story. This form is swapped under the condition that both the consumer and the sales person belong or used to belong to the same communities, which include online or offline ones. Community storytelling and swapping can imbue the consumer's shopping experience with collective meanings, beliefs and identity as well as subcultures.

5.1.1.1 Network-oriented Operant Resources and Value Creation

Under the findings of the consumers' stock of social and cultural operant resources, in this thesis it has notably been discovered that there is community-oriented resources deployment by individuals during the retail story. As discussed in the literature review, network-oriented resources collaboration and value creation have been increasingly drawing the attention of Service-Dominant Logic researchers (e.g. Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Meanwhile, consumer culture theorists, such as Arnould et al. (2006), have concluded that a community-based network of relations is one of the elements that constructs the social aspect of the operant resources of an individual.

According to Arnould et al.'s (2006) conceptualisation of the consumer's social operant resources, those who interact with brand communities or consumer tribes can contain this kind of social operant resources, and potentially they will deploy them when they interact with employees or the store atmospherics. A few retail articles

have given the general idea that some in-store customers are current “fans” of the brand-related communities, clubs or groups (e.g. Hollenbeck et al., 2008). However, little attention has been paid to researching how individuals deploy these community-generated subculture and collective values, and how the deployment of collectively created values can affect the interpretation and conceptualisation of consumers’ in-store experiences.

The identification of the community story swapping in this research could assist other researchers wishing to investigate retail settings to gain a better understanding about a person’s stock of operant resources from a collectivist point of view, rather than from an individualistic one. According to the data, when an individual visits a retail store, either the customer or the service provider can initiate a conversation regarding the stories and life experiences about his or her interacted online brand community, social networking service, consumer tribe, or local community.

This vocal behaviour facilitates the consumer and the sales person identifying and bonding with each other through collective identity, and thus leads to a more personal and complicated level of interactions. Under this circumstance, this provides a rich source for detecting the community-oriented personal resources, for example, according to the interviews, the community members (i.e. the consumer and sales person) reported that they would talk about their normative beliefs, and the group activities that they practise with their community or consumer tribe. That is, the vocal performance of story swapping in the retail store facilitated the consumers to activate

and exchange their operant resources that were enriched with community or tribe members' collectively created values, subcultures, rituals, meanings, and identities, and consequently, embedded the network or community-related meanings in the shopping trip.

5.1.2 The Vocal Interaction, and the Meaning/Identity Co-creating and Problem Solving Process

It was stated in the literature review that this research was aimed at exploring the consumer-to-employee aspect of interaction in facilitating the co-creation of the consumers' retail experiences. In particular, there has been investigation into the detailed process of how resources are activated and deployed between individuals and sales people in the stores. The second part of the findings pertains to the discovery that the co-creation of the consumer's retail experience is established based on a process, which requires both the consumers and sales personnel to deploy social skills and cultural knowledge to transform past or current life experiences into the form of vocal language and then collectively to convert these into meanings, personal myths, identities, and solutions. In particular, the value-in-use process has been found to be constructed by two phases: the storytelling phase, and the role switching and story swapping phase.

The recognition of this research gap in relation to human resources integration was made after reviewing the extant literature on Service-Dominant Logic and retailing. Theoretically, a number of Service-Dominant Logic scholars have pointed out that

employees should be integrated as operant resources, and that they play important roles in co-creating value (e.g. Echeverri and Skålen, 2011; Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Grönroos and Ravald, 2011). In addition, researchers who have studied servicescapes and service encounter have also raised the matter of the roles of employees, who are capable of communicating with the customers as well as constructing values (e.g. Arnould et al., 1998, Bitner, 1992; Solomon et al., 2010; Surprenant and Solomon, 1987). However, the existing retail literature, when studying the “interaction” aspect of social and cultural competencies integration, has tended to pay more attention to consumer-to-physical settings interaction rather than that of the consumer-to-sales person.

Apart from the lack of attention to the consumer-to-employee aspect of interaction, in this thesis it has also been argued that the detailed value-in-use process on how resources are shared and collaborated is under studied. Regarding this, S-D Logic scholars often put emphasis on the role of value-in-use as a process in facilitating the co-creation of value (e.g., Frow and Payne, 2011; Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Gummesson, 1991; Lusch et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2006, 2008) and the existing retail literature has addressed the resource integration nature of the consumer’s retail experience co-construction (e.g. Borghini et al., 2009; Diamond et al., 2009; Hollenbeck et al., 2008; Kozinets et al., 2004). However, the detailed process of value-in-use between the value co-creators has not been examined previously.

The findings suggest that consumers actively select the employees as potential value-in-use partners among all the resources (e.g. store atmospherics) that are provided by the company in order to direct and determine their own personalised, special, and meaningful service experience. Of particular note, according to the interview data, the consumer is invariably the person who initially narrates something about his/her life, which further reveals that he/she nearly always prefers to be the primary performer and key value co-creator. Moreover, the initiation of the conversation indicates that the individual chooses actively to invite the service providers to participate in his/her designed value creation process rather than being manipulatively engaged with the firm-offered atmospherics.

In terms of the detailed value-in-use process, this thesis has elicited that the co-creation of the retail experience through storytelling and swapping between an individual and a sales person is established based on a process. In particular, this process is seen as the role playing and role switching through the media of vocal language. In addition, it has been discovered that this requires both the consumers and sales personnel to deploy social skills and cultural knowledge to co-transform past or current life experience into meanings, identities, and solutions

At the storytelling stage, the consumer would take the position as the story narrator, and identity, meaning, and help seeker. He or she would initiate the conversation by narrating a piece of a life event or personal experience (i.e. the family story, tragedy story, gendered story, and/or community story). The consumer narrated life story

could not only provide the sales person rich information about what had happened/is happening in this person's life, but also revealed that the storyteller hoped the story listener could assist him or her to interpret the meaning out of the life event, develop identity and personal myth, make sense of life itself, and/or find possible solutions for a personal problem. While the customer was telling his or her narrative, the sales person would take the role of the story listener, whose position was to deploy social and cultural knowledge and skills to digest the information, process the story, and gain insights about the "true" needs of the consumer.

After the storytelling stage, came to the story swapping phase when the sales person would change his/her role from the story listener to story narrator. Meanwhile, this person would also transform into identity and meaning co-creator as well as problem solver. The staff member would deploy a piece of similar life experience to share with the customer after listening to their side of the life story and through this they could not only build connection with the customer, but also provided a stock of rich social and cultural resources for the consumer to determine and assess who and what he/she was, what the meanings of the life events were, and/or how to solve a personal problem. Conversely, when the sales representative played the role as the story narrator, the consumer would transform from the story narrator to the story listener and he or she would check and confirm whether or not the employee had provided a stock of credible resources to co-create with. At the same time, the consumer would utilise his or her knowledge and skills to reflect upon the personal meanings and "decode" the answer. As a result of the story swapping, the in-store shopper may have

responded to the employee with a show of satisfaction, which implied that this person was the beneficiary from the service.

5.1.3 The Personalised and Unique Retail Experience of the Consumer, and a Long-lasting Relationship

Another research objective of this thesis was to investigate the outcomes in relation to human interaction and service experience co-creation. According to the data, the vocal performance of story swapping not only transforms the consumer into the beneficiary, who acquires individuality, specialised service, and a solution he/she is expecting from the shopping trip, but also facilitates the retailer in building and potentially maintaining a long-term relationship with him/her.

For over a decade, retail literature has extended the servicescapes approach to develop research on evaluating themed retail environments' (e.g. brandscapes, flagship brand stores, themed entertainment brand stores, themed flagship brand stores, brand museums, and etc) generated outcomes, including delivering aesthetic and hedonic pleasure to shape spectacular-related experiences for customers (e.g. Kozinets et al., 2004; Verhoef et al., 2009) and promoting the brand, building brand loyalty, creating brand images as well as delivering brand meanings and ideologies to customers (e.g. Arnold et al., 2001; Borghini et al., 2009; Diamond et al., 2009; Hollenbeck et al., 2008).

However, the above investigations can be seen as being firm-centric as they view the consumers' side of benefits that are gained from the interaction with the retailer-provided social, cultural, and ludic resources as implicit. Consequently, it is essential to build a consumer-centric approach to explore the customer's side of gaining from the interaction, for as S-D Logic proponents emphasise they are the key performers and beneficiaries in the value co-creation process (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Payne et al., 2009; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). In particular, Vargo and Lusch (2008) highlight in one of their foundational premises that “*value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary (i.e., customer)*” (p. 7). Moreover, in recent years, marketing researchers and practitioners have increasingly realised the uniqueness and differences in consumers, and consequently, they have rolled out various marketing strategies to personalise services or products in order to prioritise their customers as well as to blur the boundaries between sellers and buyers (Kotler and Keller, 2006).

According to the interviews, two types of general outcomes emerged as the results of storytelling and swapping in the retail stores: first, the customer is the beneficiary; and second, the potential for building and maintaining long lasting relationships. In addition, apart from the identification of the general outcomes, this thesis also has elicited that each type of the life narrative is associated with a distinctive outcome, which is uniquely owned by the theme of the personal story.

The first type of the general outcome (i.e. the consumer is the beneficiary) contains three elements: 1) the creation of individuality; 2) the receiving of help or a solution

to a life issue; and 3) obtaining companionship and employee intimacy. These three discoveries reflect the perspective that vocal interaction not only facilitates recognition of the differentness and uniqueness in people, but also potentially provides a tailored service and possible solutions. In sum, the first general outcome provides a consumer-centric point of view in relation to understanding the customer's side of what is obtained through that individual prioritising their needs and personal resources.

The second type of general outcome refers more to the retailer's side of customer relationship building and maintaining, and this development is constructed by perceptual and behavioural sub-outcomes. There are two elements that are included in the perceptual sub-outcome, which are: 1) change in a positive way or keep the consumer's perceptions about the brand and/or the store; and 2) build trust and credibility. The behavioural sub-outcomes cover the customers' actions, which include: 1) creating a new cycle of story swapping and a co-creation process when the customer returns to the store; 2) service loyalty; and 3) positive word-of-mouth.

Regarding relationship building, one of the elements of the customer always being the beneficiary outcome was employee intimacy, whilst under the relationship building aspect, service loyalty and positive word-of-mouth were evidenced as being important. The combination of these three elements can contribute to the formation of a commercial friendship. Some researchers have shown an interest in studying the establishment of this friendship through the interaction between the employees and

consumers. For example, Price and Arnould (1999) examined how customer satisfaction, strong service loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth can foster this. Whilst Otnes et al. (2012) explored the ritual language that is used by the service provider and how this could enhance commercial friendship building through customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Furthermore, apart from the general outcomes as a result of the vocal interaction, the data reveal that each type of the personal story not only shares the general outcomes, but also has its own distinctive one, which is unique to the type of narrative. Regarding this, it has been found that swapping of the family story can facilitate the consumer preserving family history and infusing family pride. The tragedy story is associated with pain reducing, healing and moral support, whereas the gendered story could lead to the construction of gendered roles and images. Finally, the community story narration can assist the connections amongst community members in real life. These positive and distinctive outcomes serve to reinforce the general outcome that the consumer is the beneficiary.

5.2 Contributions

An important contribution of this research is the notion that it extends the Service-Dominant Logic perspective to develop a better understanding of the relationship between the consumers' stock of sociocultural aspects of operant resources and the co-creation of their retail experiences. In particular, the roles of the consumer-to-employee interaction in facilitating resources integration have been examined. The

conducting of qualitative research methods, including two sets of interviewing to elicit both consumer and employee perspectives as well as participant observations have assisted in the bridging of the following research gaps.

First of all, whilst the extant retail literature has researched the co-creative and key performative role of the consumer in the value and/or experience co-creation process (e.g. Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Lusch et al., 2007; Payne et al., 2009; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008), it has failed to examine the customer's stock of operant resources since its focus has been on the design scenarios of different types of themed retail environments that are provided by the retailers, including the technological, functional, aesthetical elements, and cultural aspects of the offerings. In this research, the discovery of the four themes of the life story (i.e. the family, tragedy, gendered, community stories) refocuses the lens on consumer-orientation since the details of various types of the customers' stock of social and cultural dimensions of operant resources that individuals actively deploy and integrate when they interact with the sales person in stores has been probed.

Second, S-D Logic scholars have raised the matter of the "network-orientation" of value co-creation as well as the formation of the stock of operant resources of an individual (e.g. Arnould et al., 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). However, little attention has been paid to researching how tribalism or collectivism contributes to the consumer's side of competencies as well as influencing and interpreting their retail experience. One of the findings of this thesis addresses this, for the identification of

the community story swapping could assist other researchers as well as practitioners in understanding better about a person's stock of operant resources from a collectivist point of view, rather than from an individualistic one.

Third, investigation of the dialogical "interaction" raised by S-D Logic scholars has been restricted to examining the consumer-to-store ambience interaction and hence, the consumer-to-employee aspect has been neglected. This thesis contributes to consumer experience study in retailing in terms of studying the relationship between human interaction and value co-creation. That is, it has examined the consumer-to-employee interaction, in particular, the storytelling and swapping aspects of face-to-face interactive conversations functioning as a platform to facilitate resources integration.

Fourth, S-D Logic scholars often talk about value-in-use as a process, and also the existing retail literature does address the interactive nature of the value and retail experience co-construction (e.g. Borghini et al., 2009; Diamond et al., 2009; Hollenbeck et al., 2008; Kozinets et al., 2004), however, the specific value-in-use process needs to be examined. Regarding this research gap, the discovery of the role taking and switching during the consumer-to-sales person interaction can contribute to both the S-D Logic and retailing studies since it demonstrates a detailed process regarding how resources are deployed, interacted, and integrated between the value co-creators.

Finally, offering entertaining and spectacular dimensions of the retail experience, and promoting the brand are the major goals of a retailer (e.g. Borghini et al., 2009; Diamond et al., 2009; Hollenbeck et al., 2008; Kozinets et al., 2004). However, there has been a lack of literature exploring the personalised and unique retail experiences that can be generated by prioritising the differences in people's needs and their contained resources. Given the outcome that consumers are beneficiaries from dialogic connectivity, it would appear that a shift towards a more consumer-centric approach could prove beneficial to stores. In particular, it has emerged that positively influencing consumers' perceptions and behaviours can contribute to maintaining a customer relationship in the long run.

5.3 Managerial Implications

The discovery of the story swapping aspect of the retail experience co-creation raises six implications for retailers, in the realms of customer relationship building, employee recruiting, training, and management, and in-store design of evoking conversations.

Building long-term relationships – Nowadays, in the highly competitive business environment, marketers adopt novel marketing strategies to build relationships with customers and attempt to be their “friends”. For example, numerous companies have tried to be very “personal” with their target customers, such as the Starbucks coffee stores in the UK who have started to put their customers' names on the cups in order

to be “friendly” (BBC, 2013). Moreover, the Coca-Cola Company has recently been conducting a “share a Coke” campaign by swapping its iconic logo with the consumer’s name in order to deliver the message that the company cares about its customers the most (The Coca-Cola Company, 2010). For retailers, they could adapt the consumer-to-employee interaction to increase the customer return and relationship building in the long run since the personal conversation could inject “personality” into the service, which is highly related to the consumer’s daily life and practices. Importantly, the service experience is uniquely owned by the consumer and this uniqueness attracts the customer to return to the store again and again to tell new “episodes” of the story to the sales assistant. In this way, the consumer relationship can be strengthened and maintained.

Recruiting and training employees – The exploration of the detailed process on how interactive conversation can activate and integrate values by this researcher can provide retailers insights into what type of people they should employ as well as how to train them. It is posited that people who have rich life experiences and hence, social and cultural capital, should be considered as having important qualities when it comes to recruitment. These personal values and experiences could be reflected in their “interests, hobbies, and personal skills” written on the CVs. Meanwhile, when the company interviews the candidates, those that come across as being passionate about people, appearing to have higher levels of listening and social skills as well as being able to initiate and develop conversations, should also be seen as potentially ideal employees for hiring.

In terms of training, in general, retailers set their priorities by inculcating knowledge of the product, the company history and culture, and professional ways to greet and serve the customers in their employees (Soloman et al., 2010). The findings of this thesis suggest that companies should also focus on the listening, communicating, and problem solving aspects of personal skills training. To this end, they could design special assessments and role playing training in order to provide their staff plenty of opportunities to practise, and thus to be able to think creatively, as well as being more flexible in terms of different situations and problems solving when they serve the customers in real life.

Empowering employees – This research has drawn attention to the importance of employees since they are key in communicating with customers about the brand as well as delivering memorable and personal shopping experiences. Nowadays, retailers tend to focus on how to train their employees in order to be professional, and familiar with the products. Moreover, the firms also tend to “script” the conversation, with the aim of making it possible for their staff to be able to deliver a personalised service to the consumers (Hollenbeck et al., 2008). However, the common practice of company designed training involving strictly followed rules and regulations has been criticised a de-humanising employees. That is, under these circumstances they are hindered from engaging in their unique and personal level of knowledge and experience to communicate with the consumers as well as in helping to solve specific problems for them. Therefore, it is proposed that companies should consider giving a certain amount of “power” or “freedom” to their employees so that they are able to give a tailored service that caters for the different needs of the consumers, thereby injecting a

“human touch”. Apple’s secret employee training manual provides an example that illustrates the adoption of such a strategy. That is, the store managers give the Apple Store Geniuses their own power to adjust the ways of serving customers and thus to make sure the consumers leave the store happy (Forbes.com LLC, 2013). However, since this is a novel idea yet to be extensively tested, some risks might be involved, such as the employees might overpower the brand, or they might fail to portray professionalism. Therefore, any moves in this direction should be carefully planned in the recruitment and training procedure to ensure that this does not happen. Moreover, the conduction of trials in certain stores could also help to test this business plan and thus reduce any risks.

Conducting “conversation management” – Since personal conversations play important roles in customers communicating with sales people about their shopping goals and needs, it is essential for companies to conduct “conversation management” in order to understand their needs better. The term in this case refers to both products and empathy. Importantly, connecting customers through the moral values and the satisfaction of their needs through empathy have been found to be the keys in this research as this would appear to assist firms in gaining customer loyalty, and potentially maintaining a long lasting relationship. Regarding “conversation management”, the retailers could put out feedback forms, carry out interviews, or establish focus groups with their employees on monthly or quarterly bases, to find out what types of conversations are involved during customer service. In addition, the companies could embark on the same methods in order to gain insight from the

consumers' perspective about their "true" needs as well as what personal service really means to them.

Reducing costs of theming – Pleasant and memorable service experience construction with the leverage of sales personnel could draw the retailer's attention away from designing and putting up theming in the store towards human resource management during the training of employees. This could potentially reduce the production costs for those retailers who have been investing huge amounts of money in this or other types of store settings. Regarding this, some researchers have pointed out that themed stores can be very expensive, complicated and challenging to run due to the fact that under these circumstances organisations are not only retail businesses, but also entertainment ones and, therefore they need to acquire different sets of skills in terms of merchandising and development. That is, in order to have a successful large scale themed flagship brand store, this requires millions of dollars to develop and millions more to maintain it (Kozinets et al., 2002). Therefore, the retailer should perhaps utilise its sales representatives to shape the shopping experience for the consumers rather than focusing on investing vast amounts of money designing theming and spectacular experiences.

Building a conversation area – As well as reducing the costs on theming, the firms could rethink about the design of the store in terms of how to merchandise the interiors in order to evoke conversations and role taking, for it is clear from this research that the consumers' pleasant and personalised shopping experience is enhanced by the aspect of conversation. As pointed out earlier, the establishment of

the coffee bar and the open plan design of the Nespresso store encourage two-way interaction between the in-store customers and sales representatives. That is, this case provides insights for retailers to re-think about the store atmospherics designs. They may need to provide some sitting areas with the displaying of products as well as coffee, tea, or water in order to orient the customer towards a “chatting” mood and when the customers are sitting down, having a drink, the sales people could engage with them at the personal level with the leverage of product demonstrations.

5.4 Limitations

There are two types of conflicts identified as the limitations of this thesis, which are: 1) conflict between the brand image and the actual co-created one; and 2) conflict between service and store/brand loyalty. Moreover, a third limitation is uncertainty.

Conflict between the brand image and the actual co-created image – One of the important findings of this research is the co-creation of values, beliefs, images, identities, and ideologies through service. With respect to this, the topics of the personal conversation between the customers and the in-store employees play a crucial role in influencing and determining the types of values they collectively construct, with the family, tragedy, gendered, and/or community stories having been found to be the common conversation topics that are discussed in a store. However, the values, meanings, and images that are embedded in these four themes of the life story could be against the company-designed images and culture. For example, if the company aims to portray a brand with the luxurious and sophisticated perspectives of the image

and store experience, the narrated stories between the consumers and employees might contain too much mundane, ordinary, and economical values. In this case, the consumer actually co-creates or receives values and images that are overpowering the ones that it wishes to deliver and therefore, this could cause confusion and failure to promote the brand.

Conflict between service loyalty and store/brand loyalty – In this thesis it has been elicited that the customers can develop a sense of service loyalty and companionship towards the sales person and when they return to the store they often prefer to be served by the same staff member, who previously listened to their stories and provided help. In some cases, some informants pointed out that if the sales person who they wished to engage with again was busy serving other customers, they did not mind spending some time waiting. Therefore, it is suggested that the consumers might perceive the employees as being in more important positions than the company or the brand and consequently their, attachment, and loyalty towards the employees might lead them to care less about the brand or its products. This could cause some conflict between the customer's loyalty towards the sales person and his or her loyalty towards the store and/or the brand. For example, if the employee gets treated unfairly by the company, or changes his/her job, the consumer might generate negative attitudes or feelings towards the brand, or follow the sales person to his or her new work place in retailing.

Uncertainty of the planned/unplanned behaviour – It has been discovered in this research that when the consumers interacted with the sales people in the retail stores, they preferred to be the key performers during the interaction and always initiated conversations relating their personal lives. However, there is no evidence to show if these vocal behaviours were planned ahead before they visited the stores, or whether they were impulsive actions. That is, there is no way of knowing whether a particular person pre-planned interaction with the sales personnel or whether the physical construction of the store environment galvanised their decision to engage in conversation.

5.5 Future Research Agenda

There are three areas proposed for future research exploration: 1) group-oriented storytelling and exchanging; 2) destruction of value; and 3) other types of life stories.

Group-oriented storytelling and exchanging – Researchers who study Service-Dominant Logic stress that value co-creation should be considered as a network-oriented approach, in which “*all social and economic actors are resource integrators*” (Vargo and Lusch, 2008, p. 7). This thesis has been focused on investigating the interactive behaviours between two parties: the consumer and the employee. Even though community-related operant resources that a person deploys in the store, and how these group-based resources implicitly influence the co-created values and experience have been probed, this needs to be extended to consider the participation of other customers and employees. For example in this regard, some Nespresso staff

mentioned that when they had been serving and talking with the customers in their store, others had joined in the conversation. Moreover, some informants pointed out that they sometimes went shopping with a friend or family member. Therefore, storytelling and swapping with the involvement of multi-resource integrators needs to be considered in future research undertakings.

Destruction of value – As discussed earlier, the focus of this research has been to examine the “co-creation” aspect of consumers’ retail experience construction and it has been elicited that this is associated with a positive perspective of outcomes, such as the consumer is the beneficiary, and customer relationship building. However, in the recent years, some scholars (e.g. Cova and Paraque, 2012) have begun argue that value can not only be co-created, but also can be corrupted and these authors have particularly examined the destruction of value within the consumer tribe or community. More specifically, the deconstruction of value might be due to negative impacts on the brand or the company, such as, the tribe members collectively rejecting the brand hegemony, because they are dissatisfied with the company’s behaviour and they could even destroy part of the brand values (ibid). In relation to these issues, it is proposed that in-depth interviews and observations are carried out in the future aimed at exploring how the storytelling and swapping perspectives of in-store human interaction can twist or destroy values, and customer’s retail experiences as well as the negative dimension of such outcomes.

Other types of the life story – This research has discovered that when the consumers conducted interactive conversations with the sales consultants in the retail store, they were likely to share four types of personal life story, which included the family, tragedy, gendered, and the community versions. Since the sample size was restricted to less than thirty people's experiences, it is not possible to come to the generalised conclusion that these four types of personal story are commonly practised by the majority of the population. Therefore, more such studies are needed in the future in order to elicit whether other narratives are used by customers to initiate the process of co-creating value.

References

- Aaker, D. (1996). *Building strong brands*. New York: The Free Press
- Achrol, R. S. (1991). Evolution of the marketing organization: New Forms for Turbulent Environments. *The Journal of Marketing*, 55(4), 77-93.
- Achrol, R. S., & Kotler, P. (1999). Marketing in the network economy. *The Journal of Marketing*, 63, 146-163.
- Ailawadi, K. L., & Keller, K. L. (2004). Understanding retail branding: conceptual insights and research priorities. *Journal of Retailing*, 80(4), 331-342.
- Allen, Douglas E. (2002). Toward a theory of consumer choice as sociohistorically shaped practical experience: The Fits-Like-a-Glove (FLAG) framework. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(4), 515-532.
- Antonides, G., & Van Raaij, W. F. (1998). *Consumer behaviour: a European perspective*. Wiley Chichester.
- Arnold, M. J., & Reynolds, K. E. (2003). Hedonic shopping motivations. *Journal of Retailing*, 79(2), 77-95.

Arnold, M. J., & Reynolds, K. E. (2009). Affect and retail shopping behavior: understanding the role of mood regulation and regulatory focus. *Journal of Retailing*, 85(3), 308-320.

Arnold, S. J., Kozinets, R. V., & Handelman, J. M. (2001). Hometown ideology and retailer legitimation: the institutional semiotics of Wal-Mart flyers. *Journal of Retailing*, 77(2), 243-271.

Arnould, E. (2005). Animating the big middle. *Journal of Retailing*, 81(2), 89-96. 268

Arnould, E. (2007). Service-dominant logic and consumer culture theory: Natural allies in an emerging paradigm. *Consumer culture theory*, 11, 57-76.

Arnould, E. (2008). Service-dominant logic and resource theory. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36(1), 21-24. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe.

Arnould, E., Price, L., & Malshe, A. (2006). Toward a cultural resource-based theory of the customer. *The Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate and Directions*, 320-333.

Arnould, E., & Thompson, C. (2007). Consumer culture theory (and we really mean theoretics): dilemmas and opportunities posed by an academic branding strategy. *Research in Consumer Behavior*, 11, 3.

Arnould, E. J., & Price, L. L. (1993). River Magic: Extraordinary Experience and the Extended Service Encounter. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(1), 24-45.

Arnould, E. J., Price, L. L., & Tierney, P. (1998). Communicative staging of the wilderness servicescape. *Service Industries Journal*, 18(3), 90-115.

Arnould, E. J., & Thompson, C. J. (2005). Consumer culture theory (CCT): Twenty years of research. *Journal of Consumer Research*. 31(4), 868-882.

Arthurs, J. (2003). Sex and the City and consumer culture: Remediating postfeminist drama. *Feminist Media Studies*, 3(1), 83-98.

Babin, B. J., & Attaway, J. S. (2000). Atmospheric affect as a tool for creating value and gaining share of customer. *Journal of Business Research*, 49(2), 91-99.

Babin, B. J., & Babin, L. (2001). Seeking something different? A model of schema typicality, consumer affect, purchase intentions and perceived shopping value. *Journal of Business Research*, 54(2), 89-96. 269

Babin, B. J., Darden, W. R., & Griffin, M. (1994). Work and/or fun: Measuring hedonic and utilitarian shopping value. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(4), 644-656.

Bagozzi, R., & Pieters, R. (1998). Goal-directed emotions, *Cognition and Emotion*. Psychology Press (UK).

Bagozzi, R. P. (1975). Marketing as exchange. *The Journal of Marketing*, 39(4), 32-39.

Bagozzi, R. P. (1997). Goal-directed behaviors in marketing: The role of emotion, volition, and motivation. *Psychology and Marketing*, 14(4), 309-313.

Bagozzi, R. P., & Dholakia, U. (1999). Goal setting and goal striving in consumer behavior. *The Journal of Marketing*, 63, 19-32.

Bagozzi, R. P., & Dholakia, U. M. (2006). Antecedents and purchase consequences of customer participation in small group brand communities. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 23(1), 45-61.

Baker, J. (1986). The role of the environment in marketing services: the consumer perspective. *The services challenge: Integrating for competitive advantage*, 79-84.

Baker, J., Levy, M., & Grewal, D. (1992). An experimental approach to making retail store environmental decisions, *Journal of Retailing*, 68 (4), 445-460.

Baker, J., Parasuraman, A., Grewal, D., & Voss, G. B. (2002). The Influence of multiple store environment cues on perceived merchandise value and patronage intentions , *Journal of Marketing*, 66, 120-141.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1998). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. University of Texas Press, 270

Ballantyne, D., & Varey, R. J. (2006). Introducing a dialogical orientation to the service-dominant logic of marketing. *The service-dominant logic of marketing: dialog, debate, and directions*, 224-235.

Bateson, J. E. G., & Hui, M. K. (1992). The Ecological validity of photographic slides and videotapes in simulating the service setting. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 19(2), 271-281.

Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended Self. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139-168.

Belk, R. W. (1992). Moving possessions: An analysis based on personal documents from the 1847-1869 Mormon Migration. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19(3), 339-361.

Belk, Russell W., & Costa, Janeen A. (1998). The mountain man myth: A contemporary consuming fantasy. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 25(3), 218-240.

Belk, R. W., Sherry, J. F., Jr., & Wallendorf, M. (1988). A naturalistic inquiry into buyer and seller behavior at a swap meet. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 14(4), 449-470.

Bendapudi, N., & Leone, R. P. (2003). Psychological implications of customer participation in co-Production. *Journal of marketing*, 67, 14-28.

Berger, S. A. (2009). *The five ways we grieve: Finding your personal path to healing after the loss of a loved one*. Trumpeter.

Berry, L. L. (1986). Retail businesses are service businesses. *Journal of Retailing*, 62(1), 3-6. 271

Beverland, M., Lim, E. A. C., Morrison, M., & Terziovski, M. (2006). In-store music and consumer-brand relationships: Relational transformation following experiences of (mis)fit. *Journal of Business Research*, 59(9), 982-989.

Beverland, M. B., & Farrelly, F. J. (2009). The quest for authenticity in consumption: consumers' purposive choice of authentic cues to shape experienced outcomes, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 838-856.

Beverland, M., Kates, S. M., Lindgreen, A., & Chung, E. (2010). Exploring consumer conflict management in service encounters. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 38(5), 617-633.

Bitner, M. J. (1990). Evaluating service encounters: The effects of physical surroundings and employee responses. *The Journal of Marketing*, 54(2), 69-82.

Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *The Journal of Marketing*, 56(2), 57-71.

- Bitner, M. J., Booms, B. H., & Mohr, L. A. (1994). Critical service encounters: The employee's viewpoint. *The Journal of Marketing*, 58(4), 95-106.
- Bitner, M. J., Booms, B. H., & Tetreault, M. S. (1990). The service encounter: Diagnosing favorable and unfavorable incidents. *The Journal of Marketing*, 54(1), 71-84.
- Boje, D. M. (1991). The storytelling organization: A study of story performance in an office-supply firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 106-126.
- Bolton, R. N., Grewal, D., & Levy, M. (2007). Six strategies for competing through service: An agenda for future research. *Journal of Retailing*, 83(1), 1-4. 272
- Borghini, S., Diamond, N., Kozinets, R. V., McGrath, M. A., Muñiz Jr, A. M., & Sherry Jr, J. F. (2009). Why are themed brandstores so powerful? Retail brand ideology at American girl place. *Journal of Retailing*, 85(3), 363-375.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Bridges, E., & Florsheim, R. (2008). Hedonic and utilitarian shopping goals: The online experience. *Journal of Business Research*, 61(4), 309-314.
- Bristor, J. M., & Fischer, E. (1993). Feminist Thought: Implications for consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19(4), 518-536.

Brodie, R. J. (2009). From goods to service branding. *Marketing Theory*, 9(1), 107-111.

Brown, G. H. (1950). Measuring consumer attitudes toward products. *The Journal of Marketing*, 14(5), 691-698.

Brown, S., Kozinets, R. V., & Jr, J. F. S. (2003). Teaching old brands new tricks: Retro branding and the revival of brand meaning. *The Journal of Marketing*, 67(3), 19-33.

Bruner, J. (1987). Life as narrative. *Social Research*, 11-32.

Burke, P. J. (1980). The self: Measurement requirements from an interactionist perspective. *Social psychology quarterly*, 18-29.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods*. Oxford university press.

Burger, J. M. (1992). *Desire for control: Personality, social, and clinical perspectives*. Plenum Press, 273

Carù, A., & Cova, B. (2003). Revisiting consumption experience. *Marketing Theory*, 3(2), 267-286.

Chebat, J. C., Sirgy, M. J., & Grzeskowiak, S. (2010). How can shopping mall management best capture mall image? *Journal of Business Research*, 63(7), 735-740.

- Chebat, J.-C., & Michon, R. (2003). Impact of ambient odors on mall shoppers' emotions, cognition, and spending: A test of competitive causal theories. *Journal of Business Research*, 56(7), 529-539.
- Chebat, J.-C., Sirgy, M. J., & Grzeskowiak, S. (2010). How can shopping mall management best capture mall image? *Journal of Business Research*, 63(7), 735-740.
- Cherington, P. (1920). *The elements of marketing*. New York: Macmillan.
- Cherington, P. T. (1916). The Economics of Retailing (Vol. 6, pp. 382-385). JSTOR.
- Childers, T. L., Carr, C. L., Peck, J., & Carson, S. (2001). Hedonic and utilitarian motivations for online retail shopping behavior. *Journal of Retailing*, 77(4), 511-535.
- Cohen, E. (1988). Authenticity and commoditization in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15(3), 371-386.
- Cohen, E. (1989). Primitive and remote: Hill tribe trekking in Thailand. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 16(1), 30-61.
- Coca-Cola (2013), Share a Coke, Available from: <http://www.coca-cola.co.uk/share-a-coke/share-a-coke.html> [Accessed 25/06/2013]
- Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and power: Society, the person and sexual politics*: Stanford University Press. 274

Constantin, J. A., & Lusch, R. F. (1994). *Understanding resource management: How to deploy your people, products, and processes for maximum productivity*: Planning Forum (Oxford, Ohio and Burr Ridge, Ill.).

Cooley, C. H. (1964). *Human nature and the social order*. Transaction Publishers.

Copeland, M. (1923). Relation of consumers' buying habits to marketing methods. *Harvard Business Review*, 1(3), 282-289.

Cova, B., & Cova, V. (2001). Tribal aspects of postmodern consumption research: The case of French in line roller skaters. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 1(1), 67-76.

Cova, B., & Dalli, D. (2008). *From communal resistance to tribal value creation*. Paper presented at the 1st International Conference on “Consumption and Consumer Resistance.

Cova, B., & Dalli, D. (2009). Working consumers: the next step in marketing theory? *Marketing theory*, 9(3), 315.

Cova, B., Kozinets, R., & Shankar, A. (2007). *Consumer tribes*. Butterworth Heinemann.

Cova, B., & Paraque, B. (2012). Value creation versus destruction: The relationship between consumers, marketers and financiers. *Journal of Brand Management*, 20(2), 147-158.

- Cox, K. (1964). The responsiveness of food sales to shelf space changes in supermarkets. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 1(2), 63-67.
- Cox, K. K. (1970). The effect of shelf space upon sales of branded products. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 7(1), 55-58.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Sage.
- Curhan, R. C. (1974). The effects of merchandising and temporary promotional activities on the sales of fresh fruits and vegetables in supermarkets. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 11(3), 286-294.
- D'Astous, A. (2000). Irritating Aspects of the Shopping Environment. *Journal of Business Research*, 49(2), 149-156.
- Day, G. S. (1994). The capabilities of market-driven organizations. *The Journal of Marketing*, 58(4), 37-52.
- De Chernatony, L. (1999). Brand management through narrowing the gap between brand identity and brand reputation. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15(1), 157-179.
- Denzin, N. K. (1970). *The research act in sociology: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. Butterworths (London).

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and Issues*. Sage Publications.

Desmet, P. (2010). Are emotions consequences of affective expectations? A commentary essay. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(8), 903-904.

Devine-Wright, P., & Clayton, S. (2010). Introduction to the special issue: Place, identity and environmental behaviour. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30(3), 267-270.

Diamond, N., Sherry, J. F., Muñiz, A. M., McGrath, M. A., Kozinets, R. V., & Borghini, S. (2009). American girl and the brand gestalt: Closing the loop on sociocultural branding research. *Journal of marketing*, 73, 118-134. 276

Dobscha, S., & Ozanne, J. L. (2001). An ecofeminist analysis of environmentally sensitive women using qualitative methodology: The emancipatory potential of an ecological life. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 20(2), 201-214.

Donovan, R. J., & Rossiter, J. R. (1982). Store atmosphere: An environmental psychology approach. *Journal of Retailing*, 58, 34-57.

Donovan, R. J., & Rossiter, J. R. (1994). Store atmosphere and purchasing behavior. *Journal of Retailing*, 70(3), 283-294.

Duncan, T., & Moriarty, S. E. (1998). A communication-based marketing model for managing relationships. *The Journal of Marketing*, 62(2), 1-13.

Edvardsson, B., Enquist, B., & Johnston, R. (2005). Cocreating customer value through hyperreality in the prepurchase service experience. *Journal of Service Research*, 8(2), 149.

Elliott, R., Fischer, C. T., & Rennie, D. L. (1999). Evolving guidelines for publication of qualitative research studies in psychology and related fields. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 38(3), 215-229.

Epp, A. M., & Price, L. L. (2011). Designing solutions around customer network identity goals. *Journal of Marketing*, 75(2), 36-54.

Forbes (2012) Apple's secret employee training manual reinvents customer service in seven ways 2012. Available from:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/carminegallo/2012/08/30/apples-secret-employee-training-manual-reinvents-customer-service-in-seven-ways/> [Accessed 08/07/2013]

Eroglu, S. A., Machleit, K. A., & Davis, L. M. (2003). Empirical testing of a model of online store atmospherics and shopper responses. *Psychology and Marketing*, 20(2), 139-150. 277

Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2005). Self-construal, reference groups, and brand meaning. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(3), 378-389.

Firat, A. F., & Venkatesh, A. (1995). Liberatory postmodernism and the reenchantment of consumption. *Journal of consumer research*, 22(3), 239-267.

Fischer, E., & Arnold, S. J. (1990). More than a labor of love: Gender roles and Christmas gift shopping. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17(3), 333-345.

Ford, J. B., LaTour, M. S., & Lundstrom, W. J. (1991). Contemporary women's evaluation of female role portrayals in advertising. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 8(1), 15-28.

Fraim, J. (2000). The entertainment economy *The Journal of Marketing*, 64(1), 113-117.

Frank, R. E., & Massy, W. F. (1970). Shelf position and space effects on sales. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 7(1), 59-66.

Frow, P., & Payne, A. (2011). A stakeholder perspective of the value proposition concept. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45(1/2), 223-240.

Gallagher, S. (1992). *Hermeneutics and education*. SUNY press.

Ganesan, S. (1994). Determinants of long-term orientation in buyer-seller relationships. *The Journal of Marketing*, 58, 1-19.

Gardner, B., & Levy, S. (1999). The product and the brand. *Brands, consumers, symbols, & research: Sidney J. Levy on marketing*, 131.

Gentile, C., Spiller, N., & Noci, G. (2007). How to sustain the customer experience: An overview of experience components that co-create value with the customer. *European Management Journal*, 25(5), 395-410.

Gottdiener, M. (1998). The semiotics of consumer spaces: the growing importance of themed environments. *Servicescapes: the concept of place in contemporary markets*. Chicago: NTC Business Books.

Gottdiener, M., & Lees, L. (1995). *Postmodern semiotics: Material culture and the forms of postmodern life*. Blackwell Oxford.

Goulding, C., Shankar, A., Elliot, R., & Cannford, R. (2009). The marketplace management of illicit pleasure. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(5), 759-771.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2, 163-194.

- Grewal, D., Baker, J., Levy, M., & Voss, G. B. (2003). The effects of wait expectations and store atmosphere evaluations on patronage intentions in service-intensive retail stores, *Journal of Retailing*, 79 (4), 259-268.
- Grönroos, C. (1997). Keynote paper from marketing mix to relationship marketing-towards a paradigm shift in marketing. *Management decision*, 35(4), 322-339.
- Grönroos, C. (2006). Adopting a service logic for marketing. *Marketing theory*, 6(3), 317-333.
- Grönroos, C. (2008). Service logic revisited: who creates value? And who co-creates? *European Business Review*, 20(4), 298-314.
- Grönroos, C., & Voima, P. (2013). Critical service logic: making sense of value creation and co-creation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41(2), 133-150. 279
- Grossbart, S., Mittelstaedt, R., Curtis, W., & Rogers, R. (1975). Environmental sensitivity and shopping behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 3(4), 281-294.
- Gusfield, J. R. (1975). *Community: A critical response*. Harper & Row New York
- Harris, L. C., & Ezech, C. (2008). Servicescape and loyalty intentions: an empirical investigation. *European Journal of Marketing*, 42(3/4), 390-422.

- Haytko, D. L., & Baker, J. (2004). It's all at the mall: Exploring adolescent girls' experiences. *Journal of Retailing*, 80(1), 67-83.
- Higgins, E. T., Shah, J., & Friedman, R. (1997). Emotional responses to goal attainment: Strength of regulatory focus as moderator. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 72(3), 515-525.
- Hirschman, E. C. (1993). Ideology in consumer research, 1980 and 1990: A Marxist and feminist critique. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19(4), 537-555.
- Hogg, M. A., Terry, D. J., & White, K. M. (1995). A tale of two theories: A critical comparison of identity theory with social identity theory. *Social psychology quarterly*, 255-269.
- Holbrook, M. B. (1993). Nostalgia and consumption preferences: Some emerging patterns of consumer tastes. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(2), 245-256.
- Holbrook, M. B., & Hirschman, E. C. (1982). The experiential aspects of consumption: consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(2), 132-140.
- Hollenbeck, C. R., Peters, C., & Zinkhan, G. M. (2008). Retail spectacles and brand meaning: Insights from a brand museum case Study. *Journal of Retailing*, 84(3), 334-353.

Holt, D. B. (1997). Poststructuralist lifestyle analysis: Conceptualizing the social patterning of consumption in postmodernity. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 23(4), 326-350.

Holt, D. B. (1998). Does cultural capital structure American consumption? *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 25(1), 1-25.

Holt, D. B. (2004). *How brands become icons: The principles of cultural branding*: Harvard Business Press:Boston.

Homans, G. C. (1958). Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology*, 63(6), 597-606.

Homburg, C., Hoyer, W. D., & Fassnacht, M. (2002). Service orientation of a retailer's business strategy: dimensions, antecedents, and performance outcomes. *The Journal of Marketing*, 66(4), 86-101.

Huat, T. C. (1989). Confucianism and nation building in Singapore. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 16(8), 5-16.

Huber, F., Vollhardt, K., Matthes, I., & Vogel, J. (2010). Brand misconduct: Consequences on consumer-brand relationships. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(11), 1113-1120.

Hui, M. K., & Bateson, J. E. G. (1991). Perceived control and the effects of crowding and consumer choice on the service experience. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 18(2), 174-184.

Hunt, S. (2000). *A general theory of competition: Resources, competences, productivity, economic growth*. Sage Publications.

Jones, M. A., Reynolds, K. E., & Arnold, M. J. (2006). Hedonic and utilitarian shopping value: Investigating differential effects on retail outcomes. *Journal of Business Research*, 59(9), 974-981. 281

Johnson, P., & Duberley, J. (2000). *Understanding management research: An introduction to epistemology*. Sage Publications.

Kaltcheva, V. D., Patino, A., & Chebat, J.-C. (2010). Impact of retail environment extraordinariness on customer self-concept. *Journal of Business Research*, 64 (6), 551-557.

Kaltcheva, V. D., & Weitz, B. A. (2006). When should a retailer create an exciting store environment? *Journal of Marketing*, 70 (1), 107-118.

Keesing, R. M., & Strathern, A. (1998). *Cultural anthropology: A contemporary perspective*.

Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *The Journal of Marketing*, 57(1), 1-22.

King, A. (1997). The lads: Masculinity and the new consumption of football. *Sociology*, 31(2), 329-346.

Kotler, P. (1967). *Marketing management: Analysis, planning and control*. Englewood cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Kotler, P. (1973). Atmospherics as a marketing Tool. *Journal of Retailing*, 49(4), 48.

Kotler, P. (1974). Marketing during periods of shortage. *The Journal of Marketing*, 38(3), 20-29.

Kotzan, J. A., & Evanson, R. V. (1969). Responsiveness of drug store sales to shelf space allocations. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 6(4), 465-469.

Kowalkowski, C. (2011). Dynamics of value propositions: insights from service-dominant logic. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45(1/2), 277-294. 282

Kozinets, R. V. (2002). Can consumers escape the market? Emancipatory illuminations from burning man. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(1), 20-38.

Kozinets, R. V., & Handelman, J. M. (2004). Adversaries of consumption: consumer novements, activism, and ideology. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(3), 691-704

Kozinets, R. V., Sherry, J. F., DeBerry-Spence, B., Duhachek, A., Nuttavuthisit, K., & Storm, D. (2002). Themed flagship brand stores in the new millennium: Theory, practice, prospects. *Journal of Retailing*, 78(1), 17-29.

Kozinets, R. V., Sherry Jr, J. F., Storm, D., Duhachek, A., Nuttavuthisit, K., & Deberry-Spence, B. (2004). Ludic agency and retail spectacle. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(3), 658-672.

Kuhn, T. S. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.

Lee, L., & Ariely, D. (2006). Shopping goals, goal concreteness, and conditional promotions, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33 (1), 60-70.

Levy, S. (1999). Symbols for sale. *Brands, consumers, symbols, & research: Sidney J. Levy on marketing*. Sage Publications.

Levy, S. (2006). How new? How dominant? *The service-dominant logic of marketing: dialog, debate, and directions*, 57-64.

- Lindgreen, A. (2001). A framework for studying relationship marketing dyads. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 4(2), 75-88. 283
- Lindgreen, A., & Beverland, M. (2009). Research quality in qualitative case studies. *Research Memorandum 79, March 2009*.
- Lindgreen, A., Vanhamme, J., & Beverland, M. (2009). *Memorable customer experiences: A research anthology*. Gower Publishing, Ltd.
- Low, G. S., & Fullerton, R. A. (1994). Brands, brand management, and the brand manager system: A critical-historical evaluation. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31(2), 173-190.
- Lusch, R., & Vargo, S. (2006). *The service-dominant logic of marketing: dialog, debate, and directions*. ME Sharpe Inc.
- Lusch, R., Vargo, S., & Tanniru, M. (2010). Service, value networks and learning. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 38(1), 19-31.
- Lusch, R. F., Vargo, S. L., & O'Brien, M. (2007). Competing through service: Insights from service-dominant logic. *Journal of Retailing*, 83(1), 5-18.
- Lusch, R. F., Vargo, S. L., & Wessels, G. (2008). Toward a conceptual foundation for service science: Contributions from service-dominant logic. *IBM Systems Journal*, 47(1), 5-14.

Machleit, K. A., Kellaris, J. J., & Eroglu, S. A. (1994). Human versus spatial dimensions of crowding perceptions in retail environments: A note on their measurement and effect on shopper satisfaction. *Marketing Letters*, 5(2), 183-194.

Maffesoli, M. (1995). *The time of the tribes: The decline of individualism in mass society* (Vol. 41). Sage Publications.

Massara, F., Liu, S. S., & Melara, R. D. (2010). Adapting to a retail environment: Modeling consumer-environment interactions. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(7), 673-681. 284

Mathwick, C., Malhotra, N., & Rigdon, E. (2001). Experiential value: Conceptualization, measurement and application in the catalog and Internet shopping environment. *Journal of Retailing*, 77(1), 39-5

Mattila, A. S., & Wirtz, J. (2001). Congruency of scent and music as a driver of in-store evaluations and behavior. *Journal of Retailing*, 77(2), 273-289.

Mattila, A. S., & Wirtz, J. (2008). The role of store environmental stimulation and social factors on impulse purchasing. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 22 (7), 562-567.

McAlexander, J. H., Schouten, J. W., & Koenig, H. F. (2002). Building brand community. *Journal of marketing*, 66(1), 38-54.

McCarthy, E., Perreault, W., & Quester, P. (1990). *Basic marketing: a managerial approach*. Irwin Homewood etc.

McCracken, G. (1986). Culture and consumption: A theoretical account of the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 13(1), 71-84.

McCracken, G. (1989). Who is the celebrity endorser? Cultural foundations of the endorsement process. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 16(3), 310-321.

McCracken, G. D. (1996). *Big hair: A journey into the transformation of self*. Overlook Press Woodstock, NY.

McCracken, G. D. (2005). *Culture and consumption II: Markets, meaning, and brand management*. Indiana University Press.

McKinnon, G., Kelly, J., & Robison, E. (1981). Sales effects of point-of-purchase in-store signing. *Journal of Retailing*, 57(2), 49-63. 285

McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(1), 6-23.

Mead, G. H. (2009). *Mind, self, and society: From the standpoint of a social behaviorist (Vol. 1)*. University of Chicago Press.

Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974). *An approach to environmental psychology*. The MIT Press.

Mehta, R., & Belk, R. W. (1991). Artifacts, identity, and transition: Favorite possessions of Indians and Indian immigrants to the United States. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17(4), 398-411.

Merz, M., He, Y., & Vargo, S. (2009). The evolving brand logic: a service-dominant logic perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 37(3), 328-344.

Meyer, C., & Schwager, A. (2007). Understanding customer experience, *Harvard Business Review*, 85(2), 116-126.

Michon, R., Chebat, J.-C., & Turley, L. W. (2005). Mall atmospherics: the interaction effects of the mall environment on shopping behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(5), 576-583.

Moore, E. S., Wilkie, W. L., & Lutz, R. J. (2002). Passing the torch: intergenerational influences as a source of brand equity. *The Journal of Marketing*, 17-37.

Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing. *The journal of marketing*, 58, 20-38.

- Morin, S., Dubé, L., & Chebat, J.-C. (2007). The role of pleasant music in servicescapes: A test of the dual model of environmental perception. *Journal of Retailing*, 83(1), 115-130. 286
- Morrison, M., Gan, S., Dubelaar, C., & Oppewal, H. (2010). In-store music and aroma influences on shopper behavior and satisfaction. *Journal of Business Research*, 64 (6), 558-564.
- Muiz Jr, A. M., & Schau, H. J. (2005). Religiosity in the abandoned Apple Newton brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, 31(4), 737-747.
- Normann, R., & Ramirez, R. (1998). Designing interactive strategy: From value chain to value constellation. *Chichester, New York*.
- Oakley, A. (1972). *Sex, gender and society*. Maurice Temple Smith Ltd. (London).
- O'Cass, A., & Grace, D. (2008). Understanding the role of retail store service in light of self-image–store image congruence. *Psychology and Marketing*, 25(6), 521-537.
- Oliver, R. L., & Rust, R. T. (1997). Customer delight: foundations, findings, and managerial Insight. *Journal of Retailing*, 73(3), 311-336.
- Olson, S. R. (1999). *Hollywood planet: Global media and the competitive advantage of narrative transparency*. Routledge.

Otnes, C., Lowrey, T. M., & Kim, Y. C. (1993). Gift selection for easy and difficult recipients: A social roles interpretation. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(2), 229-244. 287

Østergaard, P., & Jantzen, C. (2000). Shifting perspectives in consumer research: From buyer behaviour to consumption studies. *Interpretive Consumer Research: Paradigms, Methodologies & Applications*, 9-23.

Park, C. W., Jaworski, B. J., & MacInnis, D. J. (1986). Strategic brand concept-image management. *The Journal of Marketing*, 50(4), 135-145.

Park, K.-w., & Park, J.-Y. (2009). The role of shopping goals on customer loyalty. *Journal of Service Science*, 1(2), 191-210.

Payne, A., Storbacka, K., & Frow, P. (2008). Managing the co-creation of value. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36(1), 83-96.

Payne, A., Storbacka, K., Frow, P., & Knox, S. (2009). Co-creating brands: Diagnosing and designing the relationship experience. *Journal of Business Research*, 62(3), 379-389.

Peñaloza, L. (1994). Atravesando fronteras/border crossings: A critical ethnographic exploration of the consumer acculturation of Mexican immigrants. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21(1), 32-54.

Peñaloza, L. (1998). Just doing it: A visual ethnographic study of spectacular consumption behavior at Nike Town. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 2(4), 337-400.

Peñaloza, L., & Venkatesh, A. (2006). Further evolving the new dominant logic of marketing: from services to the social construction of markets. *Marketing theory*, 6(3), 299.

Perugini, M., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2001). The role of desires and anticipated emotions in goal-directed behaviours: Broadening and deepening the theory of planned behaviour. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 40, 79-98.

Pine, B. J., Gilmore, J. H., & Digital, I. (1999). *The experience economy*. Harvard Business School Press Boston. 288

Plé, L., & Cáceres, R. C. (2010). Not always co-creation: introducing interactional co-destruction of value in service-dominant logic. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 24(6), 430-437.

Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). Co-creating unique value with customers. *Strategy & Leadership*, 32(3), 4-9.

Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing (John Wiley & Sons)*, 18(3), 5-14.

Puccinelli, N. M., Goodstein, R. C., Grewal, D., Price, R., Raghurir, P., & Stewart, D. (2009). Customer experience management in retailing: Understanding the buying process. *Journal of Retailing*, 85(1), 15-30.

Reason, P., & Rowan, J. (1981). *Human inquiry: A sourcebook of new paradigm research*. J. Wiley Chichester, UK.

Ritson, M., & Elliott, R. (1999). The Social uses of advertising: An ethnographic study of adolescent advertising audiences. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 26(3), 260-277.

Rist, R. C. (1977). On the relations among education research paradigms: From disdain to detente. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 8(2), 42-49.

Rozin, P., Markwith, M., & Stoess, C. (1997). Moralization and becoming a vegetarian: The transformation of preferences into values and the recruitment of disgust. *Psychological Science*, 8(2), 67-73.

Sands, S., Oppewal, H., & Beverland, M. (2008). The influence of in-Store experiential events on shopping value perceptions and shopping behavior. In A. Y. Lee & D. Soman (Eds.), *Advances in Consumer Research*, 35, 298-303.

Saunders, M. N., Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2011). *Research Methods for Business Students* (5th Ed.). Pearson Education India. 289

Schau, H. J., & Gilly, Mary C. (2003). We are what we post? Self-presentation in personal web space. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30(3), 385-404.

Schiffrin, D. (1996). Narrative as self-portrait: Sociolinguistic constructions of identity. *Language in Society-London*, 25, 167-204.

Schouten, J. W., & McAlexander, J. H. (1995). Subcultures of consumption: An ethnography of the new bikers. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(1), 43-61.

Schroeder, J. E., & Zwick, D. (2004). Mirrors of masculinity: Representation and identity in advertising images. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 7(1), 21-52.

Schurr, P. H., & Ozanne, J. L. (1985). Influences on exchange processes: buyers' preconceptions of a seller's trustworthiness and bargaining toughness. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 11(4), 939-953.

Sewell, W. H., Jr. (1992). A Theory of structure: duality, agency, and transformation. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 98(1), 1-29.

Sherry, J. F. (1998). *Servicescapes: the concept of place in contemporary markets*. NTC Business Books Lincolnwood, IL.

Sherry, J. F. (1998). The soul of the company store: Nike Town Chicago and the emplaced brandscape. *Servicescapes: The concept of place in contemporary markets*, 109-146.

- Sheth, J., & Parvatiyar, A. (1995). Relationship marketing in consumer markets: antecedents and consequences. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 23(4), 255-271.
- Shostack, G. L. (1987). Service positioning through structural change. *The Journal of Marketing*, 34-43.
- Sirgy, M. J. (1982). Self-concept in consumer behavior: A critical review. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 287-300.
- Slater, D., Andrews, P. L., & Laven, R. D. (1997). *Consumer culture and modernity*. Polity Press Cambridge.
- Smith, P., & Curnow, R. (1966). " Arousal hypothesis" and the effects of music on purchasing behavior. *The Journal of applied psychology*, 50(3), 255.
- Solomon, M. R. (2010). *Consumer behaviour: a European perspective*. Financial Times/Prentice Hall.
- Spencer, C. (1996). *The Heretic's feast: A history of vegetarianism*. Upne.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Sage Publications

Stryker, S. (1968). Identity salience and role performance: The relevance of symbolic interaction theory for family research. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 558-564.

Stryker, S. (1980). *Symbolic interactionism: A social structural version*.
Benjamin/Cummings Publishing Company Menlo Park, CA.

Stryker, S., & Serpe, R. T. (1982). Commitment, identity salience, and role behavior: Theory and research example. *Personality, roles, and social behavior* (pp. 199-218): Springer

Surprenant, C. F., & Solomon, M. R. (1987). Predictability and personalization in the service encounter. *The Journal of Marketing*, 51(2), 86-96.

Swidler, A. (1986). Culture in action: symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review*, 51(2), 273-286. 291

Tauber, E. M. (1972). Why do people shop? *The Journal of Marketing*, 36(4), 46-49.

The Economist (2003). The World comes to London. Available from:
<http://www.economist.com/node/1974459> [Accessed 18/01/2014].

Thompson, C. J. (2004). Marketplace mythology and discourses of power. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(1), 162-180.

- Thompson, C. J., Locander, W. B., & Pollio, H. R. (1989). Putting consumer experience back into consumer research: The philosophy and method of existential-phenomenology. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16, 133-146.
- Thompson, C. J., & Haytko, D. L. (1997). Speaking of fashion: consumers' uses of fashion discourses and the appropriation of countervailing cultural meanings. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(1), 15-42.
- Thompson, C. J., Locander, W. B., & Pollio, H. R. (1990). The lived meaning of free choice: An existential-phenomenological description of everyday consumer experiences of contemporary married women. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17(3), 346-361.
- Thompson, C. J., Rindfleisch, A., & Arsel, Z. (2006). Emotional branding and the strategic value of the Doppelgänger brand image. *Journal of marketing*, 70(1), 50-64.
- Turley, L. W., & Milliman, R. E. (2000). Atmospheric effects on shopping behavior: A review of the experimental evidence. *Journal of Business Research*, 49(2), 193-211.
- Tynan, C., McKechnie, S., & Chhuon, C. (2010). Co-creating value for luxury brands. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(11), 1156-1163.
- Vargo, S., & Lusch, R. (2008). Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36(1), 1-10. 292

Vargo, S. L. (2008). Customer integration and value creation. *Journal of Service Research*, 11(2), 211-215.

Vargo, S. L. (2011). Market systems, stakeholders and value propositions: Toward a service-dominant logic-based theory of the market. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45, 1(2), 217-222.

Vargo, S. L. (2011). On marketing theory and service-dominant logic: Connecting some dots. *Marketing theory*, 11(1), 3-8.

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *The Journal of Marketing*, 68(1), 1-17.

Verhoef, P. C., Lemon, K. N., Parasuraman, A., Roggeveen, A., Tsiros, M., & Schlesinger, L. A. (2009). Customer experience creation: determinants, dynamics and management strategies. *Journal of Retailing*, 85(1), 31-41.

Visconti, L. M. (2010). Authentic brand narratives: Co-constructed mediterraneaness for L'Occitane Brand. *Research in Consumer Behavior*, 12, 231-260.

Visitlondon (2014). Top shopping destinations in London. Available from: <http://www.visitlondon.com/things-to-do/activities/shopping/top-shopping-destinations> [Accessed 18/01/2014]

Wallendorf, M. (2001). Literally literacy. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), 505-511.

Wallendorf, M., & Arnould, E. J. (1991). " We gather together": Consumption rituals of thanksgiving day. *Journal of consumer research*, 13-31.

Walsh, G., Shiu, E., Hassan, L. M., Michaelidou, N., & Beatty, S. E. (2010). Emotions, store-environmental cues, store-choice criteria, and marketing outcomes. *Journal of Business Research*, 64 (7), 737-744.

Ward, J. C., & Reingen, P. H. (1990). Sociocognitive analysis of group decision making among consumers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 245-262. 293

WebFinance, I. (Ed.) (2013) BusinessDictionary.com.

Webster, F. E., Jr. (1992). The changing role of marketing in the corporation. *The Journal of Marketing*, 56(4), 1-17.

Weld, L. (1916). *The marketing of farm products*. The Macmillan Company.

Whitson, D. (1990). Sport in the social construction of masculinity. *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*. Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics Books.

Wikström, S. (1996). Value creation by company-consumer interaction. *Journal of Marketing Management*, (12), 359-374.

Wright, V. (1971). *Explanation and understanding*. Cornell University Press.

Yalch, R. F., & Spangenberg, E. R. (2000). The effects of music in a retail setting on real and perceived shopping Times. *Journal of Business Research*, 49(2), 139-147.

Young, M., & Willmott, P. (1992). *Family and kinship in East London*. University of California Press.

Zeithaml, V., Bitner, M., & Gremler, D. (2000). *Services marketing: Integrating customer focus across the firm*. McGraw-Hill Columbus, OH.

APPENDICES

Appendix I Main Questions in the Interviews 1

- What do you feel about shopping?
- What kind of store do you mainly shop in?
- Describe what attracts you about the design aspects of the store?
- What would make you avoid it, like think of the environment, like the atmosphere of this place, or design, the layout?
- What do you do when you receive a good/bad shopping experience?
- What is your ideal store atmospheric setting?
- What is your ideal service experience?
- What is the most important thing of their service that makes you satisfied?
- Thinking about service again, can you please describe our last positive or negative service experience?
- What would your ideal service experience involve?
- Think of service encounters you've had and just describe a good service experience with sales personnel. It can be in any retail context.
- Please give me an example of a positive service experience that you had last time.
- Think of a shopping trip you've had that wasn't enjoyable and describe that experience or any other kind of shopping experience.
- Describe a store that you like going into and anything you enjoy about it.
- How did that make you feel?
- How do you normally react to bad service?
- How do you feel about your experience there?

Appendix II Main Questions in the Interviews 2

- Can you please tell me about an experience when you served your customers?
- When you speak to customers, what is the conversation like?
- What else did you say?
- What did your customer say?
- Can you please tell me more specifically about your conversation?
- What did your customer say when you told him about your personal experience?
- Can you tell me more about this conversation?
- What else did you do when you served your customer?
- What else did you talk about when you had a conversation with your customer?
- How did you start the conversation? I mean how did you start talking about your personal life?
- When you engage with your customers by telling them your personal stories, do they tell you something about themselves?
- Where did the conversation happen the most?
- Did you say anything special to them, what types of technique did you use?
- So that other types of conversation do you normally have with your customers?
- You were talking about the personal level of conversations, can you please tell me more about them?
- Did you get trained to talk to your customers about your life experience?